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H O M E,
OR
THE IRON RULE.

A DOMESTIC STORY.

BY SARAH STICKNEY,

AUTHOR OF

“ THE POETRY OF LIFE;” “ PICTURES OF PRIVATE LIFE,” &c.

“ There is a great deal of difference between a good man and a good father: I have known bad men who excelled my father as much in parental care, as he was superior to them in real virtue.”

LORD LYTTLETON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N
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HOME,

OR

THE IRON RULE.



CHAPTER I.

MARY Grey, with all her amiable qualities, was not above the weakness of a woman ; and, as she slowly ascended the stairs, and thought how Ellen would be watching her return with happy and triumphant eyes, there flashed across her bosom such a withering thrill, as seemed at once to turn the memory of all she had felt, and done, and suffered for this beloved sister, into an ocean of bitterness. .

“ Father of Heaven !” said she, dropping on her knees as soon as she had closed the

door of the ante-room leading into her sister's chamber, "Father of Heaven! preserve me from the temptations of my own heart!"

Mary had hitherto been no farther a Christian than as she entertained a high sense of moral duty, and a high admiration of the beauty and excellence of the Christian religion; but now that the first view was revealed to her of those unfathomable depths of evil to which the ungoverned passions of our nature lead; now that she stood alone in her humiliation, and looked around her like a shipwrecked mariner, upon the floods and the waves she was destined to encounter alone; now that the very earth she had so loved for its beauty, seemed fading from beneath her steps, and its flowers and its verdant places lay blasted and desolate before her—to what source could she appeal but to that which is ever open to the broken-hearted? or how could she endure the burden of existence without the support of that arm which is

“not shortened that it cannot save?” Thus, for the first time in her life, Mary Grey poured forth a fervent heartfelt prayer, wrung from her, it is true, by the very anguish of her soul; but, happily for the wants and the weakness of our nature, there is a fount of mercy where pure and humble prayer is not rejected, whether inspired by holy aspirations, or merely prompted by the urgency of mortal need.

Mary arose at last from her posture of supplication, having held long and faithful communion with her own heart and with her God; and, taking up her light, proceeded with stealthy step to the apartment which she and her sister shared together. She approached the bed where Ellen lay, wishing, but not daring to expect, that she might have sunk into a peaceful slumber, forgetful of the important charge that evening to devolve upon the guardian of her childhood.

Her wishes were gratified, for Ellen slept.

“Is it possible!” exclaimed Mary; and a

slight flush of indignation crossed her brow, to think that a woman in such a situation, a sister of hers, and the future wife of Terence, could be so incapable of feeling, even for herself. It was but a momentary thought; and then she rejoiced at her own escape from agitating questions, and from acknowledgments of what, as a sister, she felt that she ought to have known before.

“Sleep on,” said she, “it is for the miserable to wake and weep. Sleep on, thy innocent bosom is unconscious of the frightful thoughts that have so lately tortured mine. Sleep on, thou wilt awake when the morning sun smiles sweetly on us both; but thou alone wilt find beauty or gladness in his beams.”

Seating herself upon the side of the couch, she then looked stedfastly upon the fair countenance of her who, all unconscious of the mischief that countenance had wrought, lay with a placid smile upon her lips, as calm and peaceful as if she did but close her eyes

to the wasting weariness of life, and opened their internal vision upon the greenness, and the freshness of the world of dreams.

The face of the sleeper, except where age has stamped it with his indelible footmarks, almost always reminds us of the days of infancy; and Mary's thoughts, as she gazed upon her sister, went wandering back to the happy time when, bearing the precious burden in her feeble arms, she had placed her beneath the shelter of the hawthorn, and plucked the sweet May flowers and laid them in her lap; when she had taught her to lift her rosy finger at the blackbird's song, or mocked the cuckoo's note, until the child, bewildered with the mimic and the real music, looked up entranced, as if it thought the high blue vault of heaven was filled with the melody of that ever-welcome voice. Then came the memory of after years, when the child was motherless, and learned to cling to Mary for protection from the terrors which threatened her at every

step; and with the memory of these years were mingled the thousand sacrifices that were made, the countless pangs that were endured, to screen the beloved one from all the blight and scathe of harsh rebuke, or vengeful punishment.

“And now!” Mary echoed with her lips the language of her stricken soul, for the same bright being was before her, radiant in more than the beauty of childhood. Around the same smooth brow clustered the curls of silken hair; and from the snowy eyelids she had kissed so often, descended the long shadowy lashes, upon a cheek whose roseate hue combined the glowing loveliness of earth with the purity of heaven.

“And now,” said Mary, “what has come between this angelic creature and myself, that we should not be the same to each other as we were in happier days? It is not thy fault, poor child;” and stooping down, she kissed her gently, and smoothed her pillow, and arranged

the wandering tresses of her hair; while tears of unutterable tenderness burst from her eyes, and she sighed as if the last struggle of expiring nature was about to set her free for ever from the bonds of earthly suffering.

“ Fair sister of my love,” said she, “ I had but one treasure in the world, and thou hast reft it from me. But I murmur not; thy young affections have been fondly cherished; thou couldst not live alone and be contented; thou couldst not suffer and be still like me.”

But it was only the brief and unwonted overflowing of an excited mind to which Mary Grey resigned herself in the silence and solitude of midnight. The morning came and found her externally the same as before, ready at the call of duty, watchful and observant of all surrounding things in which the good or the happiness of those she loved was concerned, and even but slightly altered in the expression of her countenance, for it was scarcely possible for it to become more pale.

One change alone might have betrayed the secret of her soul, but happily no eye was sufficiently interested to detect it. Mary had been wont to blush (and, perhaps, it was her greatest personal charm that she did so) at every strong emotion which stirred the current of her thoughts; not with the deep crimson of embarrassment, but in tacit acknowledgment of hidden feelings, for which she had never been allowed a free or natural indulgence. But now this fleeting colour, so often betraying the secrets of her deeply sensitive mind, seemed to have fled never to return; and the settled inexpressive mask of outward calm, which those whose childhood has been blighted by the dominion of the iron rule find it so expedient to wear, appeared to be fixed upon that placid countenance, as if no light would evermore break forth from beneath its dull and marble weight.

What a mournful satisfaction it is to feel that our secrets escape detection, because

there is no eye to watch us with the anxious scrutiny of partial love !

Mary felt this satisfaction in the full force, both of its pleasure and its pain ; for though no human being, perhaps, was ever more esteemed for actual merit than herself, those who constituted the immediate circle in which she moved had each of them an object of interest too engaging to admit of any minute observations being made upon her. And thus she passed on from one duty to another, and no one knew that to her the present day was less sweetened with pleasure than the past.

Allan Grey would scarcely have been thus unmindful of his sister, but that the occupations and excitements of his own mind were as much as he had leisure to engage with at present. Cathleen's increased debility proved but too plainly that if any means were adopted for her restoration, no time ought to be lost ; and while in conversation with others, he had the prudence to appear as if he placed his sole confidence in

the accomplishment of these means upon the successful issue of her brother's lawsuit, he was, in the secret of his heart, cherishing a deep seated purpose, of being himself the instrument of rescuing her from the frequent changes of an uncertain climate, under which she suffered so severely.

Who shall say to what extremes the poet's fancy will not lead him in his private calculations upon practicable things! Allan had already nearly completed a volume of poems and "fugitive pieces," upon which he fondly looked, as upon the talisman that was to open to him a blessed futurity. Had he ever enjoyed the open, unreserved intercourse of sound and practical minds, he would have better known the futility of hopes built upon such a basis. Even now he was subject to fits of despondency, while contemplating his favourite scheme, but they only served to render the light subsequently surrounding it, more vivid. For he lived in a world of imagination sacred

to himself and one sister spirit, who reigned the undisputed queen of this ideal realm.

Allan had read of sudden bursts of fame, opening out bright golden vistas to the youthful poet; and though he was far from the presumption of overestimating his own talents, there were scenes and circumstances connected with the subjects of his muse, which lent to the flowery lines a charm and a pathos, sufficiently potent, he believed, to strike the public eye, and arrest the attention of the world.

Alas! that such blind enthusiasts will not learn, except by the cruel teaching of experience, how little the bustling world is capable of appreciating the interest of their local associations, the tenderness of their attachments, or the brilliancy of the visions of personal and individual felicity which have inspired their verse.

Whilst Allan, alive only to the reveries of the poet, was occupied each day, and through the greater proportion of each night, in fostering

the first fruits of his genius, Mary was preparing herself for a task in which imagination, much less than reality, was concerned. Although without the slightest expectation that any persuasion of hers would be able to wring from her father even a reluctant consent, she never shrunk for one moment from her strong determination to leave no means untried, no stone unturned, and no resource unfathomed, that might serve the purpose of her sister and her friend.

There is an eloquence of despair as well as hope; and Mary thought of a thousand arguments that might be used, if she could but once burst through the restraint of her father's presence. And why should she not? The world and all it contained was now the same to her, whether storms or sunshine ruled the passing hour. And if she was but pleading in a just and honourable cause, what power on earth could make her spirit quail?

No! It is for the lovely and the loved to

tremble, for they have much at stake. The desolate are seldom fearful !

Those who act upon a cool, yet desperate resolve, are not apt to wait the chance of favouring circumstances. They fix their time and admit of no impediment. Mary had said to herself, "on Friday night I will discharge my conscience of this load ;" yet her heart sickened when she heard her father's voice. Without any visible alteration in her look or manner, she performed the wonted series of small attentions he habitually required, and taking out her work, sat down in silence beside him, while he opened a large volume of the lives of British statesmen.

He was some time fingering about for the narrow strip of neatly folded paper used to mark his last day's reading, and Mary cleared her throat to begin.

It seemed to her at that moment as if the very air was filled with the sound of the deep palpitations of her own heart ; and when she

opened her lips to speak, at first there was no voice. At length her father found the page he had been seeking, and then there was no time to be lost.

“Father,” said Mary, “what is your opinion of Terence Malone’s affairs?”

“I have no opinion to offer on so intricate a subject.”

“Has he told you anything about his late journey to town?”

“No. He is like the rest of you. He never communicates with me.”

“Not directly, perhaps, but he has commissioned me to explain to you, not only the cause of his going, but the result of his inquiries when there.”

“And why could not the idle fellow explain this himself?”

“Because there is another kind of business connected with this, in which he did not consider himself to be a proper agent.”

Stephen Grey still looked at his book with

undeviating gaze, as if it was impossible for anything connected with Terence Malone to be worthy his attention ; but as it was evident he was not reading, Mary went on to explain all she had gathered from her friend, on the evening of their moonlight walk, in reference to his lawsuit. This it must be confessed was not the most intelligible statement ever laid before a court of justice ; but just as Stephen Grey was about to answer with one of his low growls, which had the invariable effect of stopping all farther colloquy, she opened the counselor's letter, and laid it on the table.

After glancing at the signature, her father took it up ; and as he really wished well to Terence, whatever he might say, it was with evident satisfaction that he read these few lines, of what he deemed sound sense tending to a practical purpose.

“This looks well,” said he, eyeing every part, from the date to the signature, as if the merest word transcribed by so masterly a hand was worthy of his notice. “This looks well,” he

repeated. "Counsellor Jones is a clever practical man, a man of business, none of your ranting orators, who turn the brains of apprentice boys and women. The opinion of this man goes farther with me than anything I have yet heard in favour of poor Terence."

Mary thought this a most auspicious moment for proceeding, and she once more tried her voice.

"Then you think there is some hope yet, that this family may be restored to their rightful possessions !"

"I do, indeed."

"And their possessions once ensured to them, will be ample?"

"Ample? Why is there not pending the whole of the abbey lands extending from the parish of Welbourne to the boundary of Lord Nugent's estate? A well cultivated farm adjoining, certain bog lands in Ireland, recently reclaimed, and fifteen tenements in the liberties of Dublin?"

"If my father had heard as much of the

liberties of Dublin as I have," thought Mary, "he would scarcely have added this last item to his list;" but as it served her purpose that the list should be extended as much as possible, she kept her own counsel and went on.

"I am glad you have so much hope, because it justifies me the more in proceeding with what I have now to propose on behalf of Terence Malone."

"Has Terence Malone been offering you the honour of his hand?" said Stephen Grey, with the nearest approach to a smile his solemn features ever wore.

"He has not been offering his hand to me," said Mary, calmly.

"Then upon whom has he been conferring this incalculable benefit?"

"Upon my sister Ellen."

The whole countenance of Stephen Grey changed in a moment; while, thrusting aside the table which stood between him and Mary, as if to remove any obstacle to a clearer under-

standing, he stretched his tall person forward, and condensing all his mental as well as bodily powers into the act of attention, demanded to be fully and seriously informed of the speaker's precise meaning.

"I mean nothing more," replied Mary, "than that Terence and my sister Ellen have become warmly attached to each other, and solicit your sanction to their marriage."

"Marriage! Ellen! the child!" exclaimed her father, "the child that he used to carry, but a short time ago, across the brook in the village!" And he rose from his seat, and paced hurriedly to and fro in the room.

At last he stopped directly opposite to Mary, and looking sternly in her face, observed, "There was one expression you dared to use, which I hope never again to hear from the lips of any daughter of mine. You spake of a young man and woman being *warmly* attached to each other. What did you mean by that?"

"I meant no harm," replied Mary; "but

perhaps it would have been better to have said strongly, or deeply, attached."

"Attached would have been sufficient," said her father, again pacing to and fro, while he murmured between his teeth, "And the more fools they."

"I dare say it may appear absurd enough to you," observed Mary, "but most people have their attachments at one time of life or another."

"And pray where are yours? You are older than Ellen. Have you no attachments?"

"I have no wish to trouble you about myself, father," said Mary, in a tone of voice that must have softened any parent's heart; and her father resuming his seat, calmly requested she would proceed.

"It is for you to proceed," said she. "I have offered my petition. I cannot enforce its acceptance."

Stephen Grey bent silently forward over the table, and leaned his forehead on his hand. At last he suddenly exclaimed, "I'll tell you what,

Mary. Rather than know what I now do of the consequences of your intimacy with this Irish family, I would see those green lands untilled, and the abbey walls a heap of ruins."

"And yet, father, I am sure you do not altogether dislike poor Terence."

"No, not dislike him altogether. The youth is kindly in his nature. But show me the good that has ever come of their intimacy with us? Did I not see it all from the beginning? Did I not tell you what would follow from their play-acting, their fiddling, and their foolery; and now the boy is asking me for my daughter, that there may be one more to people their den of idleness and poverty."

"I am not at all aware that Terence means to press the subject of their marriage, under present circumstances. I trust they would both be satisfied, if you were to give your consent to the fulfilment of their wishes, on the termination of this lawsuit."

"But why consent at all? Has not the girl

a comfortable home? Has she not all she wants? And if she must marry, has she not a right to look out for a more respectable establishment in the world, than Terence is likely to afford her? For if, after all, this business should conclude satisfactorily, which is far more than we have any reason to expect, there will be lawyers beyond count to settle with, and it may be years before the real proprietors can lay hold of ready money."

"Still, father, I think you must have lived long enough to know, that we cannot love every body alike. We have preferences as well as antipathies: and would sometimes choose to live in a very humble dwelling with one individual, rather than in the most splendid mansion with another, whom our friends thought superior."

"But what is there in Terence Malone to recommend him? It must be all blind partiality,—prejudice in his favour. I do not like prejudice, either for or against. It argues an ignorant mind."

“It does, father; but we are all liable to prejudice, notwithstanding, and when it once has taken root, it is not the dictation of another, not even of a superior mind, that can drive it out.”

“Your statement is false, Mary. All minds are not liable to prejudice. There are some that rise above it.”

“My sister Ellen, however, is not one of these; and I dare venture to say she would rather marry the man of her choice, and share his poverty, than rule over the proudest mansion in the land without him.”

“Blind, foolish child! Can you see anything so prepossessing in this Irishman, Mary?”

“By your own confession, he has a kind heart, and made an excellent nurse to his dying father.”

“True; and doubtless our washerwoman’s son would do the same. And then the child’s age! Why, she is only—”

“Nineteen; and my mother, I think, was married at twenty.”

“Yes, and your mother was a very inexperienced woman, Mary ; and had many things to learn after she became mistress of my house.”

“But she was the more submissive.”

“She was so. I have seldom seen a wife who excelled her in that point of merit.”

Another silence now ensued, which Stephen Grey interrupted, by saying, “That which puzzles me the most to account for in this unreasonable and unprecedented affair, is, why you, Mary, whom I have hitherto looked upon as a girl of some prudence, should become the advocate of these two simpletons. What object have you to servè ? Is it possible that you can wish to get rid of the duty of caring for your sister ?”

“I should care for her as much were she the wife of Terence Malone as now, and I solemnly abjure all selfish purpose in what I do. Perhaps I have said too much ; will you permit me to inform the parties most inte-

rested, that you have no desire to thwart their wishes?"

"It is at your peril that you utter so great a falsehood. I have said nothing to lead you to such a conclusion. It is my firm determination never to consign a daughter of mine to beggary, until she has deserved it by her own misconduct."

"Father," said Mary, in a tone more earnest still, "it is necessary that those who speak on serious and important subjects, should clearly understand each other. You are arguing upon the expediency, — I, upon the happiness of marriage. Now as that only can be expedient which leads to the best possible result, and as happiness is the supreme desire of all human beings, it would spare some waste of words, if you would drop the idea of expediency, and look with me solely at the happiness of your child."

"A pleasant piece of female reasoning, I grant. And suppose I should do this, will you define to me what happiness is?"

“In speaking of happiness in its abstract nature, as it applies to mankind in general, it must eventually be resolved into a strict conformity with the institutes of religion ; because there is no other kind of happiness, either genuine in itself, or universally attainable. But for the present, it is more our business to consider the situation of two individuals, whose ultimate welfare ought to be as dear to us as our own.”

“And for this reason I hold myself the fittest judge of what is most conducive to their welfare.”

“And so you would be, father, if age and experience imparted either the right or the power to rule the thoughts, the tastes, or the desires of others.”

“I will not be reasoned with in this manner. I say that I have both a right and a power to rule their *actions*—with the rest they may do as they please.”

“Then with their thoughts they may learn to

execrate the design of a heavenly Father who placed them under such an earthly parent ; with their tastes they may pollute their souls by rejecting every offered blessing, for the sake of that which you deny them ; and with their wishes they may draw down curses, instead of blessings, on your head. I speak not personally, I speak of what is in human nature, and what *may* follow from the arbitrary rule you have loved too well to exercise.

“Nay, bear with me, father. Do not turn away. I am not pleading for myself. I entreat—I implore you to remember how desolate old age will be, when you have driven from you the love of all your children. Your judgment does not entirely approve the important step which now awaits your sanction ; but your objections are only pecuniary. If they were of a moral or religious nature, I would not say another word. You think you have a right to choose for your children what shall make them happy. As a parent, and as one whom I firmly

believe to be interested in their good, you have unquestionably a right to *advise* ; but how can one human being *choose* for another ? Suppose, for instance, you were to choose for the man who was internally a miser, the luxury of a monarch's court ; for the secret sensualist, the peasant's hard earned fare ; for the inborn tyrant, the office of ministering to the poor and needy ; for the generous philanthropist, that of executing partial laws ; for the humble and the timid, the glory of the victor's crown. It is needless to ask—would they be happy ? No ; we have all for our individual thoughts some hoarded treasure, whose excellence, though imperceptible to others, is adapted to our particular faculties of desire and admiration. Look into your own heart, father. I know it not. Its secrets are as much concealed from me, as mine from you. But look impartially, and you will find some idol there, to which it would be worse than mockery to make me bow down and worship. Remember, then, that

others have their idols too; and is it nothing— Oh! my father, is it nothing to have such idols dashed to pieces by mere human hands? Speak to me”—and Mary followed her father to the window, where he had retreated— “Speak to me but one word of kindness, and I will hasten with it, and make two human beings happy.”

Stephen Grey look out upon the stars. It was a clear and cloudless night. Mary thought his heart was softening, and she feared to interrupt its calm. At last he murmured, as if to himself—“They have no means, they could not live.”

“You could give Ellen a bridal portion, father,” said Mary.

“Mary,” he replied, seriously, but not sternly, “you are not acquainted with my circumstances. The separate portions of my children will be extremely small.”

“You may add mine to Ellen’s, father. I am both able and willing to maintain myself.”

“ But if you should marry”—

“ I shall never marry, father.”

“ What ails you, child ?” said Stephen Grey ; for either from his softened tone, combined with his unexpected consideration for herself, or else from her previously excited feelings, Mary could no longer restrain her tears.

“ Go to bed, child,” he continued, extending his hand to his daughter. “ You have said enough to-night. I will think of these things when I am alone. And stay, another word with you, don’t let the young couple be stealing out together, and holding clandestine meetings. We will see what can be done when Terence comes into possession of his property.

“ Stop, Mary, another word yet, and then you may go. When you talk to me again, don’t say so much about happiness, and idols, and old age, and I think you mentioned cursing. These words are not seemly in a maiden’s mouth. Besides which they have a tendency to confuse the brain. And don’t begin to cry

when you have finished. I have a particular dislike to tears. They soften good resolutions, and mix up right and wrong. Remember this, Mary, and the next time you have anything to say to me, let it be in more intelligible terms, and in a plain straight-forward way, suited to the understanding of a rational man."

CHAPTER II.

WE have said there is an eloquence of despair, as well as hope. A few days previous to the interview already described, Mary Grey would have shrunk from the idea of uttering half so many connected sentences in the presence of her father, as those which had astonished herself, no less than him; but which, could she have retained the enthusiasm of the moment, might have opened the way for a more unreserved intercourse than had ever existed between him and his children. The ardour of that moment, however, came and went with the resolution which inspired it, and in the morning she sunk back into her former self; nor could the privilege, once so ardently desired, of being

permitted to communicate to Terence and her sister the glad tidings of her father's relenting, convey one pleasurable sensation to her over-excited mind.

We do not mean to say that an amiable character can ever be the messenger of gladness without some sense of satisfaction; but the satisfaction felt by Mary was neither lively, nor engrossing; and she prepared to execute her mission, with many self-upbraidings that she was not more elated by its favourable tendency.

It is one of the lowest grades of human misery, to feel that we cannot participate in the happiness of those we love,—to sicken at their joy, even while we would not wish it less.

Mary hastened to her own chamber, after communicating to the happy couple what had passed in her conversation with her father, chiding herself for the want of cordiality, which it seemed to her, upon reflection, that she must have betrayed. But far from observing her, or the manner in which she told her story, they had thought only of themselves and each

other, and the happy future smiling before them. Not that Stephen Grey had actually granted much to calculate upon, but he had suffered his daughter to urge him so far beyond his wonted inflexible determination not to yield, that it was impossible to augur anything but well of this deviation from the *iron rule*. And Terence Malone, ardent in every hope, impassioned in every emotion, fondly believed that he read in the beautiful countenance of his future bride, an intensity of feeling corresponding with his own.

We will not occupy the attention of the reader by violating the secrets of Mary Grey, so far as to pursue her to her lonely chamber, nor lay open the conflicts she there sustained with her own heart. It is sufficient to say, she discovered, when it was too late, that she had been loving, with a depth, and a tenderness, which it needed all the aid of friendship and religion to subdue.

In her letters to Catherine Lee, she spoke of

a peculiar trial having fallen to her lot, and added, "Do not ask me, my dear friend, what the nature of this trial is. The only thing that could render the suffering it has cost me more intense, would be to explain its cause. But you must help me with your prayers. Hitherto I have been but a looker on—but an admirer of the worship of the sanctuary; now I feel the necessity of participating in that religion of which you have taught me the excellence."

Catherine answered with the greatest delicacy. Scarcely alluding to the nature of Mary's grief, she seemed to be feelingly sensible of its depth. "If you had told me all," said she, "I could not have grieved for you more than I do. Yet, much as I have longed to shelter you, above all human beings, from the shafts of suffering, since such are undoubtedly the best means that could have been made use of to lead you to the only true antidote to all suffering, I cannot even now repine. Let me use the privilege of affection, not to dictate, but to

advise that you should be now more than ever on your guard against falling into that inactive and unprofitable musing, so often the besetting sin of sensitive, and partially isolated minds like yours. My mother holds it to be an excellent plan, when labouring under the secret sorrow we can do nothing to remove, to engage in some arduous undertaking—if possible some duty, which, if impatiently resigned, will leave us committed before the eyes of the world. There are few minds so firm and energetic as to adopt this plan, but to you I think it might be available. Dear Mary, believe me I am not speaking to you in the heartless language of one who is herself untouched by the malady for which she is prescribing, though, happily for me, my griefs are shared and alleviated by the best of parents. You know how much sorrow my brother Elliott has cost us, and how many fruitless efforts we have made to maintain, between him and us, that bond of family union that once made us all so happy. He now

seems to be lost to us altogether. Report says he has been travelling on the continent, and that he associates almost exclusively, with a class so much above us in rank and literary attainments, that we can scarcely hope to win him back. You have heard of the accomplished Lady Nugent, who patronizes every new work, and lends her countenance to every print shop both in town and country. I understand my brother Elliott not only makes one of her brilliant circle when in town, but that they have been enjoying the beauties of a sunnier clime together. All this will be enchanting to Elliott, but will it last? My mother still believes that sickness or sorrow would restore him to us; but it is so long since he wrote to us, more than a mere letter of business, entitling Herbert to a sum of money sufficient for his residence at Cambridge, that to me this feeble hope appears only as the natural accompaniment of a mother's love."

Mary Grey was so free from selfishness, that

she could not read the letters of her friend, nor hear a tale of woe, nor look abroad into the world, without feeling the comparative insignificance of her own grief. Its nature, too, was such, that every tear it cost her seemed like a stain upon her woman's delicacy; and to a mind like hers, it is less difficult to cast away the fondest thought than to cherish it to the injury of another. Still, there were seasons when she detected herself accusing the friend of her youth of not having dealt quite fairly with her. "You should have been less kind, less gentle, less considerate," was the language of her heart. "You should have treated me as others did, leaving me alone to struggle with oppression, and then I should have been less grateful and more wise. Yet why should I blame another for my own presumptuous folly? I am reaping as I have sown, and the harvest is my own, whether it be one of wholesome fruits or bitterest weeds."

It was well for Mary that at this time she

was compelled to exert herself on behalf of her brother Allan, not only to assist him in preparing for his journey to London, but again to appeal to her father on a subject as much to be dreaded as that she had tried before.

That suit may be safely pronounced hopeless, which is offered to the ear of a stern man, immediately after he has compromised his dignity by granting what he considers too much.

Stephen Grey had often secretly reproached himself for his weakness in the case of the two lovers. Ellen, however, was young, and Terence was placed in peculiar circumstances, which entitled him to some consideration; but when Mary preferred her humble petition for the pecuniary means necessary for helping her brother through his dubious undertaking, Allan—poor Allan was to be made an example of; to be denied openly, and resolutely, that others might take warning from his fate.

“He has ungratefully rejected all it was in

my power to offer him," said Stephen Grey, "in the way of a respectable establishment in business ; and now after spending months in the most disgusting idleness, he asks me for money that he may indulge himself with a trip to town."

In vain did Mary explain that her brother had been working in his way, perhaps more laboriously than any of her father's servants ; and that his present object was business, not pleasure. It would have required uncommon powers of oratory to convince Stephen Grey that writing poems was more than idleness, and that publishing them was more than play.

"Say no more," he answered sternly, to Mary's last appeal. "That boy shall never waste a farthing of mine, except what he chooses to appropriate in the way of daily bread—and that is too much. Say no more. I will not be driven off my ground by a woman's tears, nor out of my reason by a woman's tongue."

In the mean time, the young poet and the

gentle being who shared his happiest, holiest visions, were enjoying the calm radiance of a beautiful sunset together. The window of Cathleen's apartment opened to the west, and they had thrown up the sash to obtain a clearer view of the hills and the distant ocean, with the river winding like a golden thread, now seen and then lost amidst the dense and many tinted foliage of the woods, until far away upon the level plain, it lay stretched out between two gently undulating banks, as if reposing for a moment ere it mingled for ever with the world of waters.

They had gazed long and fondly on a scene uniting all they could imagine of splendour and repose; but the invalid at last shrunk back, and drew her shawl around her, for though her companion was sensible of no change, she could feel a chill damp mist rising from the meadows below.

"It is not thus in Italy," said Allan, as he closed the window.

"Allan!" exclaimed Cathleen with an ex-

pression of intense desire, "you know not what pinnings of the heart I feel for that blessed country—for any country where the air is balm, and where I might look out upon the earth and heavens without this withering at the root of life. I dare not tell poor Terence what I wish, for it would break his heart to think he had not the means to gratify me; but tell me, Allan—tell me candidly, what is your opinion of your probable success. Do you feel within yourself that confidence which some call a presentiment of good?"

"I do, indeed. For I believe that an ambition so high and holy as mine was never given in vain."

"And you think that Mary will prevail with your father?"

"Unquestionably! she has prevailed in a case more difficult, and why not now?"

"Because I think your father neither judges rightly of your character, nor treats your motives fairly."

“It is but too true,” said Allan; and he turned again to the window, as if to watch for the coming of his sister. “It is but too true,” he repeated; “yet when I look into my own heart, and see how little it contains of what is really at variance with filial duty or regard, and how soon it might be won back by the natural affection of a parent, I cannot persuade myself that my father’s feelings are so imbittered against me as they really are. The only way I can account for it, is by supposing, as I always have done, that I am singled out for a particular fate. In my bright moments, when you smile upon me, I sometimes think it is for a fate that will repay me in after life for all I suffer now; but much more frequently I see the future enveloped in a sable pall, enclosing me as if within an ideal tomb.”

“Better to share the real grave with me,” said Cathleen as she leaned her throbbing temples on his shoulder, and pressed his hand with her thin pale fingers, whose form betrayed,

if possible, more plainly than her hectic colour, how certain was the progress of her fatal malady—how soon she would be sleeping in that grave to which she had but playfully bid her lover welcome. For though her strength was decreasing, and the sure symptoms of consumption as rapidly gaining ground, Cathleen did not really believe that she was dying. She thought, as thousands in her situation have done, that her indisposition was owing to the unsuitableness of the climate to her peculiar constitution; and when she lamented the series of bad colds which increased her fever and her cough, it was with firm belief that in a more genial atmosphere she would soon regain her natural vigour.

Perhaps, nothing could have been more affecting to Allan, than her smiling confidence when she spoke of the future; for, enthusiast as he was in all that belonged to the region of poetry, there were deep and awful truths imprinted on the cheek of Cathleen, to which he could not always close his eyes. Still, to pro-

long a life so precious, to rescue from the grave a form so lovely, though only for a year—a month—a day, was the proudest aim of his existence, and he would not believe that his father—that any man, however barbarous or insensate, could really be so callous as not to deem it a privilege to promote so holy and benevolent a purpose.

The shades of evening had stolen over the distant landscape ere Mary Grey appeared, approaching with the reluctant step of one who brings unwelcome tidings.

They read her meaning in her face, and Allan became, if possible, more pale than the fragile being he had so deeply pledged himself to sustain.

“It cannot be!” he exclaimed bitterly, and with clenched hands; “my father is not so cruel!”

Mary repeated, in the gentlest terms she could, what was her father’s fixed determination.

“I am penniless!” said Allan, “and we

must stay here and perish for want of a paltry sum, such as my father's meanest clerk could lend me."

Cathleen spoke not, but a crimson flush had overspread her neck and temples; and when she rose, the strong impulse of the moment gave to her tall figure something of the dignity of former years. Advancing to a distant part of the room, she then opened a casket which stood upon the table, and drew forth a diamond cross, with several other jewels richly set.

"These," said she, "were my mother's. I am the last daughter of my father's house, and it never shall be said of Allan Grey, that he stooped to borrow money for the sake of assisting one who held in her possession a rich, but useless treasure. Take them, dear Allan; if you succeed, health, which is a thousand times more precious than these, will be mine; if you fail, I shall die, and leave you free from the stigma of a disgraceful debt."

Allan looked at the jewels, at his sister, and at Cathleen.

“Surely,” said Mary, “there must be some other alternative.”

“Tell me what,” said Allan, folding his arms around her neck; “tell me what, dear Mary, and I will beg—borrow—almost steal, rather than wring from Cathleen her only treasure.”

“My *only* treasure!” said the noble-hearted girl, extending her hand to Allan. “Have I not your affection, and why should you deny me my just and natural right to assist you in saving my life? If you had gems a thousand times more costly than these, would you not give them, rather than I should act dishonestly? and think you, because of my Irish blood, that I am less scrupulous of your honour, than you would be of mine?”

“Say no more,” said Allan, fearful of the excitement his arguments might produce; while, carefully securing the jewels, he resolved, at the same time, that nothing should induce him to sacrifice them for any purpose of his own.

Terence Malone was the only proper and

efficient adviser in the present emergency ; and much as Allan had desired to avoid making any demand upon his slender means, the necessary sum of money was so trifling in itself, and so freely and cordially offered, that to have refused it under present circumstances, would have argued more of pride than generosity ; and before the two friends separated for the night, it was agreed that Allan should commence his journey in the course of two days from that time.

Leaving the young poet to describe, with his own pen, the real adventures that befel him on his novel expedition ; and leaving also, not for his pen, but for the secrets of oblivion, the bewildering visions that haunt the inexperienced mind of the intellectual adventurer, as he approaches the fountain-head of literary fame, anticipates the coming hour when he shall look from an humble distance upon the very heads which conceived, and the hands which wrote what has electrified the world, and

roused whole nations to stimulate, or to oppose the progress of truth—leaving all this to the sober consideration of the same individual on his return from town, let us turn to Mary Grey, and ask how sped the lonely hours in the absence of a brother, whose gentle and affectionate character she had never loved so entirely, as when taught, for the first time, what it was to endure the dull monotony of home duties without his ever-delicate and kind attentions.

For some days, she was sufficiently occupied in endeavouring to supply to poor Cathleen the vacuum his absence had left; for, independent of any warmer interest, it is difficult for a languid invalid to spare one kind friend from the accustomed circle. Gradually sinking under increased suffering and weakness, they would rather gather in, comfort and support from added sources; and to lose, in such circumstances, a daily and familiar prop, seems like loosening one of the barriers between them and the grave.

Besides her sisterly attentions to Cathleen, Mary had more than enough to do in struggling to appease the anger of her father, who endured nothing so ungraciously, as that his children should dare to act independently of him. Nor were her sources of anxiety diminished, when about a week after the departure of Allan Grey from his father's house, a letter arrived from Harriet, containing a more than commonly animated description of the gaieties of the little town in which her aunt resided, and concluding with this brief, but important paragraph.

“Mary, you know my sentiments on the subject of marriage. Do not question my veracity when I tell you, that I have actually captivated a *great man*,—no less a personage than Alderman Maxwell, reported to weigh twenty stones; but my own opinion is, that, in this respect, the public voice has not done him justice.”

“There is no accounting for what this mad-

cap girl may do," thought Mary ; and she wrote to her sister immediately, cautioning her, in playful terms, against the danger of flirting with a man of the alderman's weight, and importance in society.

She might as well have cautioned the winds against blowing, or the waters against tumbling from the rock. The next letter from Harriet confirmed her fears.

"The worthy alderman," said she, "drives my aunt and me out for the benefit of country air, every day. We set off at eleven, and, drawn by two fat ponies, roll ponderously along the king's highway, enveloped in a cloud of dust, through which nothing but the rays of a burning sun can penetrate ; my aunt who sits behind, looking as if she was burned to a white heat, declaring it delightful all the time. Oh that Terence Malone could see my lover ! He would excavate a niche on purpose for him in the Abbey, for I do not believe any of the old ones would hold a statue half his size. Three

days ago we made an excursion to a place with a Roman name, where strangers flock to see the remains of a castle, said to have been built, nobody knows when; and that I might the more fully enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with my Apollo, a stripling nephew was invited to join us, and take charge of my aunt. The heat was excessive. I saw nothing to occupy my attention in the Roman walls, but the river rolling past them reminded me of the Abbey. So I sat down on the banks, and would do nothing but angle in the stream. Having brought fishing rods for the party, I gave one to my aunt, and one to our nephew, and bade every one be still, that they might not frighten the fish. Still the arrangement was not complete. We were sitting there with our backs exposed to the broad glare of the hottest sun I ever felt. I therefore requested my lover to stand behind us, that we might sit in his shadow; and, would you believe it? there was shelter enough for three more. I believe no

other man under such a sun, would have stood so patiently, for I would not allow a word to be spoken. And why, Mary, do you think, was I thus solicitous to secure my own thoughts from interruption? There was something in the sight of this ruin, of the river, and perhaps in the season of the year, that brought back to my recollection some of the happiest hours of my life—the stolen hours we spent at the Abbey, before we had begun to dream that pleasure may be bought too dearly.

“After all, Mary, what do you think my father will say when he hears of my intended marriage? On the first sight of Mr. Maxwell he will think of the fate of the lean kine, and tremble for himself; but when fully assured that his daughter, and not himself, is to be the sacrifice, he will be more than satisfied; for you must know that Mr. Maxwell is not only alderman of the town of —, but that he has broad lands lying here and there, with money in the funds, substantial connexions in the

north, and relations well established, and well to do in the world, mutually supporting each other in public influence and public credit.

“That my father should question the good man’s sanity, when he finds he has chosen me for his wife, is more than probable ; but when he hears him talk about export and import duties ; and speculate upon the probable demand for salt herrings, in consequence of the cholera in the Mediterranean islands ; when he hears him execrate the French, and say that old ‘ Nap ’ should have been hung in irons against the walls of the Tower in London, instead of enjoying the privilege of dying of nothing but a cancer in his stomach ; but especially when he descants upon the merits of upholding the aristocracy of the land, believing himself to be one of that august body, my father I am sure will no longer dispute his claim to the title of a man of sound sense, and mature judgment.”

Mary Grey was herself so little inclined to jest on serious subjects, that she could not, after reading this letter, believe it possible her sister had any other design than to sport with what she often called her prudish fears; she therefore answered it with nothing more than a playful allusion to Harriet's most accommodating—most enlightened lover. What, then, was her astonishment, to find that the next communication from her sister was accompanied by a letter from Mr. Maxwell to her father, couched in terms so circumspect, so business-like, and so exactly suited to the taste of Stephen Grey, that he actually smiled as he presented it to Mary for her perusal.

“Do you know any thing of this man?” said he, watching her attentively as she read. “From his choice of Harriet as a wife, I should not be induced to think highly of his understanding; but that is the letter of a man of experience—I should almost say of a man of

sense." And he perused it once more, while Mary endeavoured to find words for her reply.

"I know nothing of the man," she said at last, "except what Harriet has told me."

"And what is that?"

"Nothing very important," replied Mary, with considerable embarrassment.

"Perhaps I should be better able to judge, if you were to show me the girl's letter."

"I do not think you would, father. The allusions to Mr. Maxwell are quite casual—that is, quite incoherent—in short, they tend to nothing. For you know Harriet is a random talker, and she writes in the same style."

"I dare say she does. And I only wonder that a man of sense should be willing to endure such prattle. But if her last letter is not much to the purpose, perhaps that in your hand may contain more information. Open it, and when you come to any particulars likely to assist my judgment, read aloud."

Mary obeyed her father with very little hope

that the letter in her hand would contain so much as a single word fit for his ear. Whether fit or not, however, it would perhaps have been well for Stephen Grey and his family, had she dared to lay the whole before him. Yet, even then, he might, perhaps, have looked upon it as a trifling enigma not worth his while to solve; for such was his total ignorance of the under currents which influence the tide of human feeling, that the language of his children, when it extended beyond the commonplace of daily facts, was wholly unintelligible to him.

Harriet wrote more seriously than usual, but still seemed to be trifling with her own destiny.

“Mary,” said she, “I know you will think I am mad, and perhaps send me a strait waistcoat by the first private conveyance, for I have actually suffered my mammoth to lay his case before my father, who will doubtless be curious to know into what hands a member of the

honourable house of Grey is about to be consigned. I therefore subjoin for his benefit and yours, a pattern of the man himself."

Here followed a sketch of the alderman, which Mary, on first opening the letter, had mistaken for a barrel, with a cannon-ball on one end; but now that the real meaning of the design was divulged, she looked fearfully at her father, to see whether it had attracted his eye. He was still studying the characters of Mr. Maxwell's hand-writing, and she read on.

"Having now favoured you with a facsimile of my companion for life, it is but just to myself to give you my reasons for choosing him. In the first place, then, it was he who chose me; and this being a compliment no man ever paid me before, it has its due claim upon my gratitude. In the next place, he is good humoured and generous, and will always let me please myself, even to the spending of his money. In the next, he has a handsome house, far exceeding in the costliness of its

furniture any other mansion in the neighbourhood. In the next, he drives a pair of beautiful ponies, and will let me drive them when I like; and, in the last place, Mary, I am like a bird without a nest—a wanderer without a home, for I cannot—indeed I cannot, live at Welbourne House; and my aunt has something in her kindness and hospitality that palls upon a spirit like mine. You say I have no heart, and I believe it; but I sometimes think, if my father had treated me like a human being, if he had raised instead of lowering me in my own esteem, I should not have been the light and worthless creature I now am. Oh! Mary, if there was any place of refuge for me, do you think I would marry this man? but there is not, for I cannot live beneath my father's withering eye, and therefore my doom is sealed."

What would Mary not have given that the sense and feeling of this letter had been couched in such language as she could have

laid before her father. Again she read it, with a view to singling out some passage suited to her purpose; but every word it contained was such as, if literally repeated, would operate like a spark of fire upon her father's anger, and might cause an explosion too fearful to be encountered.

“And yet the poor girl must not sacrifice herself in this way,” she thought; “I will try what can be done. Father,” she said, gaining courage with the effort, “from Harriet's account I find Mr. Maxwell is a man of good property and amiable character, but—”

“But what? is there any thing more to be desired in your sister's husband?”

“I am afraid she does not love him.”

“Pshaw! nonsense! all romantic foolery! What makes you think of this, when she allows the man to write to me?”

“I am sure she does not love him as a wife ought to love her husband; and if you value her happiness, you will put a stop to the match.”

“ Mary Grey,” said her father, looking sternly in her face, “ it strikes me that you have lately lost your reason, or, what is worse, become impertinent,—I know not which. One day you argue with me in favour of an union with beggary and idleness, the next you call upon me to put an end to a connexion that promises more substantial good than any thing I had ever hoped for Harriet Grey. I request,—nay, I *command*, whatever may have turned your brain, or warped your mind from its right sense of duty, that you cease from all interference in my concerns, until you learn to see more clearly, or, what is the same thing to see as I do.”

“ I only wished to say—”

“ Not another word, if you please.”

“ I thought it my duty to make you understand—”

“ I do understand ; and I tell you that your sister Harriet *shall* marry the man of her choice, and you shall not hinder it.”

Mary was obliged to retire from her father’s

presence. It would have been madness to press the subject while he remained in his present mood ; but she still hoped and prayed that a time would come, when under more favourable auspices, she might again plead for the happiness of her sister.

CHAPTER III.

THE next letter Mary Grey received was from her brother Allan, who, like a true-born poet, described the feelings, rather than the circumstances, connected with his journey, dwelling much upon the loneliness and strangeness of his situation, which the narrow bound of his early sympathies had taught him to regard as more isolated than that of other men. And so in fact it was. For while his companions by the way could freely communicate on a thousand subjects of stirring interest to them, Allan would as soon have thought of addressing himself in the way of conversation to the birds of the air, and the beasts of the

field, as to human beings he had never seen before, or whose appearance did not recommend them to his regard. He therefore maintained unbroken silence to the end of his journey, having learned from his fellow-travellers, about as much as he could have gleaned from any of the newspapers of the day.

Arrived within the centre of the great human hive, and finding the vehicle which had safely conveyed him to London, rapidly discharging itself of its load, Allan began to look about him; and seeing the agents of locomotion so numerous and so active, as to render it more likely he should be run away with, than suffered to remain where he was, he gladly availed himself of one of these ready conveyances, and was soon seated in a dusky looking chamber of the hotel which Terence had recommended, writing to Cathleen, that most mysterious of all human productions—a letter of six pages, composed in the first hour of relief from a stage coach, after a wearisome and uneventful journey.

It is not with this letter that we would presume to occupy the attention of the reader, since doubtless he has both read and written much better of his own; but with Allan's subsequent epistle to his sister Mary, when he tells her of his first attempt to force his way into public notice.

"I had fixed," said he, "upon my publisher before I came to town, and with a map of London in one hand, and the full address copied from a directory in the other, I made my way without much difficulty to the identical spot. Not having decided exactly how to open my business, I felt little doubt that engravings, annuals, newly published books, and newspapers, scattered here and there in delightful profusion, would furnish me with topics for conversation, until I had collected my forces for a direct attack upon the publisher himself. Judge, then, of my consternation, when on entering a door, over which the name and the number I sought were distinctly visible, I

found myself in the midst of a scene, which, for congregated human beings, business, bustle, and activity, outstripped the most thickly peopled parts of London, just in the same proportion as the limits of the scene were narrower than the public street.

“I could distinguish no single individual amongst the moving mass, more than a child can distinguish particular trees and flowers, immediately after he has been swung round in the air. For if they had any of them by chance stood still for a single second, the tramp of a hundred feet upon the sandy floor, the dust with which the heated atmosphere was laden, the slap of huge parcels on the counter, the flutter and rush of paper passing to and fro, sometimes in a compressed, and sometimes an expanded form, with the potent effluvia of literature in the state in which I then beheld it for the first time, so stunned my senses, and confounded my preconceived notions of the purity, the calm, and the sublimity of a

life devoted to literary attainments, that I stood aghast, with my poems in my pocket, like one who, having submitted the jewel of his life to the spell of an enchanter, suddenly beholds it changed into a grain of sand.

“I know not whether any one of those grim, grey countenances was benignant enough to turn upon me in my despair, or whether I was marked by any of those ‘lack lustre eyes,’ that looked as if their natural light was fading for want of a green field to gaze upon; but awaking at last from my reverie, and convinced that this was not the place for me or my book, I hastened from the door without having exchanged a single word with any member of the celebrated house of Brookes and Jenkins.

“After having succeeded so well in making my way to this place, I thought I might safely indulge myself with a stroll through some of the more spacious streets, where even with disappointment for your portion, it is not difficult to find amusement enough to lure you on

from hour to hour, and also to induce a kind of forgetfulness in which we are sometimes happy to take refuge.

“During my solitary wanderings, for solitude is never felt with such intensity as in the streets of a crowded city, I had time to meditate upon the best means of proceeding. The name and the address of the publisher of our review were both familiar to me, and from my map I discovered that half a mile would bring me to his establishment. All places—all men were the same to me, because they were equally unknown. Still, when I entered the door of a shop, where an immensity of business, conducted altogether in a more elegant style than the last, seemed to be going on ; I own I felt some heart-quakes that might have been spared had I known, what I was quickly informed, that Mr. Merriman was not at home.

“ ‘Are these things ominous?’ thought I, at I turned away. ‘Shall I never find so much as a footing in the literary world?’ And

quarrelling with my stars, and wondering whether ever wight forlorn was so luckless as myself, I sauntered on from street to street, until, attracted by the uncommon beauty of some engravings at a window, I once more stood still, and forgot myself in a long reverie about painting, and music, and Italy, and Cathleen.

“I had stood for some time looking at these pictures from the street, when, suddenly casting up my eyes to the door, I saw the well known name of Percival, who I am told is Lady Nugent’s publisher.

“I placed my foot upon the step, but the recollection of the many illustrious names connected with that house, made me shrink back ; when once more calling to mind the holy cause to which I am pledged—a cause that well might justify the use of all but dishonourable means, I determined to enter and try my fate at once, with the master of this establishment.

“ ‘Can I speak with Mr. Percival ?’ said I.

“A grave, gentlemanly looking man advanced, bowing slightly, and scarcely suffering his eye to rest upon me for a moment. I suppose he detected my poverty at the first glance, and knew that if I came to bargain with him, the odds must be against him.

“‘Can I speak to you in private, sir?’ I asked again, glancing round upon a motley group of loungers, who seemed to be regaling themselves with the light reading, or the lighter gossip of the hour.

“Mr. Percival led the way into a smaller room, where he placed a chair for me beside a table covered with a green cloth, and seating himself directly opposite, looked at me without the slightest relaxation of muscle.

“Tell me, Mary, if you can, why my spirit sunk within me at that moment. Mine was an honest calling, and I only wanted a fair price for the value of my work: yet somehow or other, these London tradesmen have a way of looking you through, or *down*, I know not

which it is. They seem to be sifting you for gold dust, and with one glance, turn your pockets inside out ; casting you from them just in the way of business, as they dash away the cobwebs that settle on their own shelves. In short I felt, while under the infliction of Mr. Percival's gaze, so completely lessened in my own estimation—not only shorn of my poetical honours, but curtailed of my natural dimensions as a man, that had he asked me at the beginning of our private interview, what was the nature of my business with him, I firmly believe I should have declared I had none ; and had he unfolded the manuscript I had just laid on the table, I should have utterly disclaimed it as my own.

“ Fortunately he waited until I had time to think of Cathleen, and with that thought came the boldness of a lion. With Cathleen's fading form before my eyes, I fearlessly entered upon the purpose of my visit—I opened out the poems—I even spoke of their merits, and was

proceeding quite as fluently as was consistent with the modesty of an untried author, when Mr. Percival coolly put a stop to my eloquence, by alluding to a kind of merit I had never taken into account, and of which he seemed to be a much more competent judge than myself—the *saleable* nature of my work.

“I was silent at once; and then, after glancing very slightly at the manuscript, he began to enclose it again in its cover, observing, ‘We sell nothing of this kind now. If you choose to publish on your own account, there are houses in town where it might be done for you.’

“‘At what expense?’

“‘Why you would of course want only a small number of copies for your own circle of friends, as there is no public demand for any thing in this way.’

“‘Well, suppose I had printed for me five hundred copies; what would the expense be?’

“‘I dare say it might be done for a hundred pounds, or so.’ And the man rose from his

seat, as if he had said nothing but what was perfectly agreeable.

“He was evidently impatient to be gone, but another resource now opened to me; and I felt that I could lose nothing by making the attempt.

“‘I think you publish for Lady Nugent,’ said I.

“‘We do.’

“‘Perhaps you would oblige me with a note of introduction to her ladyship?’

“‘Excuse me, sir, I have not the honour of being acquainted with your name.’ And he advanced another step towards the door.

“‘But suppose I were to obtain a recommendation from Lady Nugent, you would then be willing to take the risk of this work upon your own hands?’

“‘Lady Nugent,’ said Mr. Percival, ‘never recommends any literary work, except for its sterling merit.’

“‘Nor patronizes any, except for its rea-

worth,' said I, somewhat morosely, for the man, pressed beyond his patience with a suit, by which he saw, from the first, there was little to be gained, had accompanied his last remark with a sneer, that made me feel rather spiteful, as well as little.

"It was time for Mr. Percival and me to part. So wishing him good morning, I was walking off his premises with something more like an air, than I recollect ever to have assumed before; when on passing a group of gentlemen, who were examining a set of new engravings, my eye was attracted by the figure of one, who I felt certain must be Elliott Lee.

"Mary, have you any clear recollection of his handsome, haughty features when a boy? I am sure you must, for you are older than I am, and yet in my mind, there is a distinct impression of a youth who used to stand for all my ideal pictures of a prince. He had, if I remember right, a complexion neither light nor dark, but clear and glowing, with a high white

forehead, shaded by a profusion of dark brown hair, that rather waved than curled. His eyebrows were clearly defined, and his eyes bright, dark, and flashing. Altogether his appearance was noble, and commanding ; and while it wore the freshness of youth, it was, to my inexperienced fancy, the most beautiful I was capable of conceiving.

“With this image so deeply impressed upon my memory, that it rose up to view whenever I thought of Elliott’s name, I almost wonder how I could have recognized the same being in the man who stood before me, at the time when I was struggling to regain, by personal assumption, what I had lost in mental dignity. I think it must have been the rapid glance of his eye, so different from all others I have ever met with, that awakened a momentary association with by-gone days ; for the whole character of the stranger was so unlike that of our quondam play-fellow, that there must surely have been some secret spell at work to lead me to the truth.

“ You remember how Elliott used to bend us to his wishes—to charm us to his will. He seemed to possess the same power of fascination still, for I could not leave the place ; but querying whether I had not as good a right as other men to observe how much had been done by art to beautify the establishment of Mr. Percival, I loitered near the door, and even took up an elegant little volume, with a likeness of Lady Nugent for the frontispiece. But my attention was still engrossed by one object ; and whenever I turned towards the group of gentlemen, I was confirmed in my suspicion that he whom I have described was no other than Elliott Lee.

“ His hair, it is true, was changed, for I could discover here and there a silver thread, which must have owed its existence to change of climate, rather than to either time or trouble. His forehead was still bold and beautiful ; but his eyebrows had darkened into lines of stronger character, and the cold languid expression of

his weary eye led me to question whether it was possible, for mere association with the world so entirely to damp the natural warmth of a once noble and ardent spirit.

“ While I was speculating upon the changes wrought by time, the thought struck me, that as Elliott Lee was reported to be one of Lady Nugent’s circle of peculiar friends, he might probably be instrumental in forwarding my purpose.

“ All that I have yet done in this business seems to have forced me out of my natural character, for nothing could have been more repulsive to my feelings than to claim acquaintance, for the sake of asking a favour, with a man who had so ungraciously cast off all his early friends. It was the thought of Cathleen that again roused me ; but when I had touched the stranger’s arm, and his fine head was turned towards me in the attitude of listening, it needed that thought arrayed in all its potency, to inspire me with words to explain my meaning.

“ ‘ Pardon me this abrupt intrusion,’ said I, ‘ but if I mistake not, sir, your name is Elliott Lee ?’

“ The stranger bowed.

“ ‘ Mine is Allan Grey.’

“ He turned upon me a glance that seemed rather to search my motive, than betray the most distant acquaintance with my name. Still he must have known me, for he almost immediately asked if this was my first visit to town.

“ I replied briefly that it was.

“ ‘ Your object is amusement, I presume ?’

“ ‘ Amusement with me is out of the question just now ; my business is with some of these publishers, who seem determined not to hold any communication with me, unless I can obtain the recommendation of some literary character.’

“ ‘ What have you brought with you ?—a novel, or a treatise on rail-roads ?’

“ ‘ A volume of poems.’

“ ‘ My good fellow, they will never sell.’

“ ‘ They will never sell unless they are

printed,' said I, rather impatiently, 'and I see no chance of that, without I can obtain an introduction from some influential person.'

" 'And if your poems should sell,' continued my companion in the same cool and half sarcastic tone, 'and if the reviewers should write you up, and you should gain a name, what better would you be?'

" 'I should be,' I exclaimed, 'the happiest of human beings—I should be able to save the life of a fellow creature.'

" 'You speak enigmas to me,' said Elliott, who had retreated with me to a more retired situation, where we could converse without being overheard; 'but if your poems are respectable, and if a line to Lady Nugent would serve you—'

" 'Nothing in the world could serve me half so much,' said I, offering him a card, on the back of which he wrote an introduction, as extraordinary as ever ushered an author into the world. The words were these:

“ ‘ A young poet, once known to me as a boy, awaits the sentence of literary life or death from the lips of Lady Nugent.’

“ ‘ You are not jesting with me?’ I asked, after looking at the card.

“ ‘ No, no ; this introduction will serve your purpose as well as one more elaborately word-ed. But let me warn you again, that if you are publishing for fame you will not find it worth the cost—no, not even if your labours are attended with what is called the most *brilliant success*. Fame sounds well in the country, where people sit beneath their own vines and fig-trees, and hear her trumpet in the distance ; but believe me, for those who have it perpetually resounding in their ears, there is less of harmony than discord in the blast.’

“ ‘ I am not dreaming of fame,’ I replied, ‘ any farther than as it may be made subservient to pecuniary purposes ; but if I were, I should have the example of millions, who had sacri-

ficed their happiness, their lives, for the sake of having their names and noble deeds blown to the ends of the world upon this blast.'

" ' You speak of sacrificing happiness,' he continued, ' as if it were ours to possess, or to resign. We are miserable, and we look into the past to see which false step in life has made us what we are; but is not misery the natural heritage of man, entailed upon him in whatever path he walks?'

" ' It is; and still we can all remember sunny spots in our existence—dawnings of happiness which after events obscured—deep heart-felt yearnings for a state of greater felicity than we now enjoy, and glimpses of that state that came and went we knew not how, with high aspirations that seem to have been given us for the purpose of working out some glorious destiny; and when we lose all these, we may safely say that we have lost the means of happiness, if not happiness itself; because we know no more of the inspiration of high hopes, and energies

which have their field of action here, but their object in a better world.'

" 'Allan Grey,' said my companion, starting as if from a profound reverie, 'you are a dreamer yet. Do you remember the church-yard of Welbourne, and the evening when we two sat upon a sailor's grave?'

" 'Is it possible I should forget that evening, and the splendid sunset, and the waving of the long rank grass, and the shadow of the sycamore-trees that fell upon the church-yard path?'

" 'Well, let it pass. You at least deserve to be a poet, for you can still find beauty in nature, excellence in virtue, and happiness in life. Good bye—God bless you!'

" With the last words, he extended his hand. I was about to ask his address, but he was gone in a moment. I would have pursued him, but his whole appearance and manner mark him out for one of those beings upon whom it is misery to intrude; and had he entertained any desire to see me again, he would not have

left me without the most distant clue to his residence.

“What would I not have given to have prolonged the conversation which related to his former years—to his family—and then by degrees to have touched upon his present situation ; but the haughty glance of his eye when animated, seemed to forbid all interference with his personal feelings. Even when I looked earnestly in his face, he assumed an expression more calculated to repel observation, than to betray the secrets of his own heart.

“And now that I am again seated in my solitary chamber, the figure of Elliott Lee still haunts me ; while for the mystery which hangs about his character, I find a thousand ways of accounting, perhaps all equally wide of the truth. I think of his contemptuous manner, when I first addressed him, and despise the weakness that can still follow him with interest ; but then I recall the melancholy look and tone accompanying his last words, and I feel assured

that misfortune, rather than depravity of heart, must have separated him from his early connexions.

“Tell Cathleen, I have actually met with a being so interesting, as to occupy the first place in my thoughts for the space of one half-hour. Then tell her who that being is, and I am sure she will forgive me. To-morrow I call on Lady Nugent. Mary, if this oracle should breathe destruction on my hopes! I dare not think, for one moment, of the gulf into which I might be plunged, for I have thrown all upon one die, and if that should fail me!—

“It is easy to tell ourselves and our friends that we shall not survive the defeat of our hopes; but the principle of life lies strong and deep within the suffering heart; while the gay, the blooming, and the happy, tempt the stroke of death.

“Yet after all, Mary, I am far from desponding. Hope is my nightly comfort, and

my daily food. It is true I awake sometimes with that dull aching consciousness of life, which makes us long to close our eyes again, and sleep for ever ; and all who are acquainted with this terrible awaking, know that it has little to do with joyful anticipation. Happily, the morning light brings me fresh views of the present and the future ; and, shaking off this burden from my soul, I refresh myself with an ideal ramble round the walls of the Abbey, while its blessed inmates are asleep ; or I stroll to the banks of the river, and see the fields and the woods arrayed in more than their wonted verdure. And all this in the heart of London ! Just upon the same principle, that in the depth of winter, when the snow lies heavy on the ground, and the winds are chill and frosty, we are apt to dream of bright and sunny weather, and of the luxury of reposing amongst flowers, and breathing soft and balmy airs.

“ I would bid you think of me to-morrow, but that my bidding would not reach you until

after my doom was sealed. While I write, I am full of hope. Oh, may the vision last ! It must—it shall ! For I hold it as a part of human destiny, that our presentiments are less fallacious than our reasonings. They are both liable to the bias of inclination ; but our presentiments are generally stronger, and more determinate ; and for this reason, they not unfrequently work out their own conclusions.

“Adieu ! You must, long ere this, have been weary of me, and my letter. Commend me to all the good spirits around you, and believe me, &c. &c. &c.”

CHAPTER IV.

MARY Grey waited with impatience for the next communication from her brother; for such was the enthusiasm with which he had entered upon his romantic project, that it seemed to extend, with one exception, through every member of the circle he had left behind. Minds more experienced than theirs in the practical concerns of life, would have attached little importance to the anticipated benefit arising from a book of poems; but from the isolated situation of Allan's friends, they were always liable to the same error with himself, of taking false views of human nature, and of placing whatever object they looked upon with

interest in a focus of powerful and concentrated light.

It is not the only disadvantage of the *iron rule* that it creates unnatural timidity, and distrust. It narrows the range of the intellects, as well as the feelings; for by restraining the open assertion of individual opinion, it cuts off all opportunity for the candid examination of such opinions, for comparing them with those of more experienced minds, and for submitting them to the test of common sense. Thus the poetical dreamer, who cannot see the truth, and the man of strong prejudices who will not, may both owe their mental blindness to the too great severity under which they have been educated.

Three days after the letter we have last transcribed, a packet of the same size was placed in Mary's hand. It began abruptly with the poet's introduction to Lady Nugent.

"I went," he said, "as you may readily believe, with trembling knees, and palpitating

heart. Impatient as I was, the way seemed shorter than I had expected, and fearing I might be too early, I paced to and fro for some time opposite the door. It then struck me that I should be too late, and that her ladyship's attention might be preoccupied by other guests. With this thought I entered—at least I would have entered, but that the footman who answered my ring, seemed determined to dispute my right; telling me that two hours later his lady would be at liberty, which I understood to mean she would then be receiving calls. I told him that I came on business. His countenance fell. I then begged him to present my card, and he left me to speculate upon how many hours of the day a literary lady can fairly call her own.

“It was more than I expected, when the footman returned, and announced it as his lady's gracious pleasure to receive me. I know not how I trod those stairs. My recollections are only of the fading away of all substantial

things, of a miraculous transportation into a region as different from that I had lately inhabited, as if the wand of an enchanter had suddenly called up before my ravished senses the fields and the bowers of Arcady. Certain I am, that the bloom and the scent of flowers was around me, and that Eolian harps, some distant, and some near, awoke that mysterious and aerial melody which has so powerful an influence in bewildering the excited mind.

“The doors of a mansion like this, Mary, do not open and shut like our doors; neither am I prepared to attest their

‘harmonious sound,
On golden hinges turning.’

I am rather inclined to think they open without sound at all; for before I had time to collect my scattered senses, I found myself in a splendid saloon, near one of the windows of which, reposed a lady on a rose-coloured couch, sipping her nectar (for what else could it be?) from

a small china cup ; while bread, such as we commoners of nature eat—nay, actually a slice of ham, lay on the snowy surface of a damask napkin beside her.

“ I had never heard that Lady Nugent was young. But then I had never doubted that she was so, any more than that Jupiter, Vulcan, or Saturn were men well stricken in years. Indeed, so powerful was my preconception on this score, that had I, in a synod of the gods, been introduced to a middle-aged Cupid, I should scarcely have been more inclined to question his identity, than I was that of the illustrious lady before me, on finding that she had passed the meridian of her day. Yes, though her dress was arranged with the purest taste, and though the colour of the rose was so blended with every thing around her, as almost to create an atmosphere of youth and beauty, there were symptoms of age not to be questioned, in her hands, her forehead, and even in her smile.

“ It struck me, on gazing round the room,

that for those who dread being detected in their downward progress to the grave, something might be done in the way of killing time, (as painters, not as loungers, use the verb to kill) by reversing the order of such apartments as Lady Nugent's; in every recess of which stood a Venus, a Hebe, or some wood or water nymph, whose rounded arms and dimpled cheeks are calculated perpetually to remind the beholder of what he should not be thinking of—the buoyancy, the vigour, and the freshness of youth. Nor were there Cupids wanting to complete the scene; for high over head, grasping in one arm the rich folds of rose-coloured drapery that fell on each side of the windows, peeped out two mischievous urchins, who looked as if they meditated, even yet, the aim of a bold arrow for their lady's heart.

“The lady herself had striven hard (and she had an unquestionable right to do so) against the encroachments of the fell destroyer. She wore a Grecian turban which concealed great

part of her forehead ; and where her cheek was hollow, fell such bright and glossy ringlets, that the outline was scarcely distinguishable. She must have once been beautiful, for her eyes were still bright and expressive, while her smile was almost lovely in spite of time ; but the thought of youth had so possessed me, and the signs of age were so conspicuous, that I could not help thinking how cruelly wrinkles might occupy the place where dimples once had been.

“ If you love me, Mary, half as well as I love myself, you will say it is time to have done with this trifling, and tell you how my fortunes sped.

“ Well, I stood, I believe, very much like my father’s cow-boy, in the presence of the literary lady, until she motioned me to be seated, and then I sat anything but easily, for my limbs seemed to be multiplied to an incalculable number. .

“ ‘ You are intending to publish, I suppose,’ were the first words I heard.

“ ‘ I am,’ I replied, and my voice seemed to

be carried away to the farthest recesses of the room—to Apollo, to all the nymphs, and even to Venus herself.

“ ‘What is the title of your work?’

“ ‘The Solitary, and other poems.’

“ ‘The Solitary!’ said Lady Nugent; ‘you would do better, in these days, to call your book the steam engine. It would be more in character with the times.’

“ ‘I am afraid it would hardly be in character with the interior of my book; but perhaps that is not of much consequence.’

“ ‘What is your name?’ asked her ladyship, not quite sure whether I was simple enough to say this in solemn earnest.

“ ‘Allan Grey.’

“ ‘Rather a taking sort of name,’ she observed, holding out her hand for the manuscript, which I was beginning to disentangle from its cover.

“ Picture me, Mary, if you can, endeavouring to sit still and look unconcerned, while Lady

Nugent glanced about amongst my poems, with an eye of lightning.

“ ‘Very good,’ said she, in a kind of half murmur to herself,—‘very good.’

“My head seemed to touch the ceiling, high as it was.

“ ‘A little too monotonous.’

“I felt to be sinking through the floor.

“ ‘I see you have talent.’

“For a moment I was restored to my proper level.

“ ‘Many people have talent’——

“I endeavoured not to sink again.

“ ‘But all cannot use it like you.’

“Again I endeavoured not to rise, for I was dizzy with acting the foot-ball, and longed to be at rest. At last her ladyship relieved me in some degree from this extraordinary exercise.

“ ‘After all,’ said she, turning to me, ‘I would recommend you, rather than risk these poems with the public, to go home and tend your father’s sheep.’

“ ‘My father has no sheep,’ said I, with some indignation, that such a conclusion should be proposed to the grand object of my life.

“ ‘I meant no insult to your dignity, young man,’ said Lady Nugent, in a conciliatory tone. ‘I have had more experience than you in these affairs, and we are too apt to imagine that experience gives us a right to advise.’

“ ‘Far be it from me to question that right,’ I replied. ‘If your ladyship would seriously take the trouble to advise a stranger, and one almost wholly ignorant of the world, I should be both proud and happy to listen.’

“ ‘Advice does not always make us either proud or happy,’ she continued, rather sarcastically. ‘Elliott Lee was with me last evening. He tells me you live in the country, and I confess I am sorry that one who has the enjoyment of a comfortable home, with such indulgence of his poetical taste as rural life affords, should come to this great Babel, to risk his peace of mind in a precarious adventure. For,

candidly speaking, I do not think your work will sell. Not because it wants merit, but because there seems to be a sort of national distaste for poetry just now.'

" 'In what way is this distaste to be accounted for? '

" 'There are many circumstances that combine to give a transient bias to national character—circumstances which it requires more political philosophy than I possess, to explain. The spirit of the times seems to be exclusively a practical spirit, which travels abroad by steam, and rail-roads, and which, in the home department, strikes at the root of old institutions, and builds up new, before dull people of the last generation have time to understand the benefit of either. The region of poetry is ideal; and though its office is to elicit new and brilliant thoughts, it must have old associations, firmly rooted feelings, and truths ancient as the world, for its materials.'

" 'The causes you speak of,' said I, 'may

operate against the sale of poetry, but there must be some other reason why poetry is no longer written ; for we see that all our former bards, whose charmed lays were once the delight of the public, have turned their attention exclusively to prose.'

“ ‘I believe the same reason operates here, also. You must be aware that the composition of poetry requires a kind of enthusiasm—a glow of feeling—a burst of impulse. All this I understand to be comprised in what is commonly called inspiration ; and for the support of such inspiration, the poet needs a degree of reverence in the public mind, which is quite at variance with the spirit of this age. It is true he can write, and perhaps write best, in obscurity ; but then he surrounds himself with an imaginary world, whose applauses feed the lamp of his genius, as well as if they were more substantial, or real. It is when his poetry no sooner appears in print, than it is submitted to the keen searching of a thousand critics, who

measure the length of his lines, compare his syllables, refer to the root from whence his rhymes are derived, and examine the correctness of his statements, telling the public, in language the most unceremonious, of all the particular points in which they have found him wanting—it is then that he feels his ardour damped, and determines to write no more. Were this an age for venerating high and holy things, public feeling would protect the poet's art from public profanation, and he would write with the confidence that a fostering and congenial spirit was abroad, to whose sheltering wings he might commit the child of his genius. But he must be more than man, who can retain his enthusiasm after he has seen the heart-effusions of his solitary hours, subjected to the censorship of critics, so utterly incapable of entering into his views, as to calculate the merit of his intellectual power solely by the standard of its saleable produce.'

“ ‘ And yet,’ said I, when Lady Nugent had

ceased speaking, ‘I should think that authors, who are not only conscious in themselves of high intellectual merit, but who have already won the applause of the world, would cease to regard the cavilling of inferior minds.’

“ ‘ That they regard it without pain, one may easily believe; but though it may fail to wound them, it may damp their enthusiasm—just as we may be exceedingly annoyed and hindered in our progress—even so much so as to be induced to turn into another path, by an animal that is too insignificant to excite any apprehensions of personal danger. But mark me well! I am not quarrelling with the liberty of the press—I glory in it, as one of the greatest privileges of the country in which we live; and when our national muse has had time to recover from this temporary embarrassment, she will take a higher flight, and become more energetic, more pure, and more sublime for the persecution she has undergone.’

“ I could not see the case exactly as her ladyship did, and I still argued that a genuine poet might hold himself above these things.

“ ‘ Wait my young friend,’ said she, ‘ until your name is in print—wait until your days of sickness come—your days of weakness, and emaciated nerves; when your servant brings the bitter and unpalatable draught prescribed for every hour, and along with it your letters, your newspapers, and your reviews, which you open with eager but trembling hand; and, behold, you are cut in as many pieces— butchered in as many different ways, as the fancy of the writer prompts; and all by a hand unskilled in the office of dissection—by one that knows only how to slay. Would you be likely, at such a moment, to proceed with the poem upon which your future fame was depending?

“ ‘ Or wait until certain heart-aches, no matter from what cause, assail you. Suppose an old and valued friend has just disowned you; or a demand has been made upon your purse

which you are unable to meet; or a parent, a brother, or a child has just been laid in the grave; and with the tears of anguish in your eye, you read what the whole world is reading simultaneously with you, that it is time for you to withdraw from the walks of literature, since the vigour of your mind seems to be gone. How would your poem prosper then?

“ ‘ Or wait until you have an enemy—a bitter, railing enemy, who watches every false step you make, and rings out an alarm when you fall. Wait until you see this enemy reading, with greedy eye, in one of the influential journals of the day, that with nothing but the pretensions of a poet to entitle you to the name you have written verses without pathos, or harmony, or common sense. How is it likely that your next poem would speed after this?’

“ ‘ I confess,’ said I, “that these are instances well calculated to damp the poet’s fire; but if we reverse the picture, it is but fair to suppose that an equal proportion of

stimulus arises out of public applause, of which your ladyship must have proved the force as well as the truth.'

"Lady Nugent answered me with a look of the most ineffable contempt. 'It is nothing,' said she, 'all nothing! It will not ease one heart-ache, or gain one real friend; but it may excite suspicion in some you already have, and envy in others. At all events, they will accuse you of an excess of vanity, which they themselves, under similar circumstances, would have felt. No, no, the kind look of an approving eye is worth it all.'

"'Ah!' said I, 'you value the good too lightly, and attach too much importance to the dark passages of an author's life.'

"'I speak as a woman,' continued Lady Nugent; 'but I have not yet told you what the darkest passages of this life are. When you are well, and in high spirits, with your nerves braced for the warfare of the world, it scarcely costs one painful thought to be told

that you want talent, information, taste, or any of the other requisites for an author. But far beyond all this, is a license assumed by some reviewers, to interfere with the private character—a license as cowardly, as it is unfair; as despicable in man, as it is wounding to the peace of woman. Smarting under the scourge of an unseen enemy, the unfortunate writer, whose private wrongs and sufferings have found a voice in the language of the poet, may hear herself reviled in public for a depravity of life and conduct, as foreign to her nature, as if she were a vestal nun. And this, too, in the face of friends, who are but too ready to drop off; of children, who would fain look up to her, but may not, with this brand upon her brow; of domestics, and dependents, who catch at every word of abuse, as if it set them free from duty; and of enemies, who propagate the scandal with a sneering pity, as if the evidence were too strong for even their benevolence to doubt.

“ ‘ Oh ! I am weary of it all. Believe me when I tell you, for I have tried it, literary fame has nothing to repay you for the peace it takes away. Go back to your father’s house, be insignificant, and you may yet be happy.’ ”

“ Lady Nugent spoke with deep feeling, and I pitied her from my very heart, for few people have experienced more of this kind of injustice than she has. Yes ; I, an obscure and humble individual, pitied this great and celebrated woman, for she was passing into the vale of years, without the peace that constitutes the richest blessing of old age.

“ ‘ Now tell me candidly,’ said she, assuming her blindest smile, ‘ have I not shaken your resolution ?’ ”

“ ‘ No,’ I answered at once, and decidedly.

“ ‘ What ! with those gentle eyes, can you be resolute ?’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, in a good cause ; your ladyship has entirely mistaken my motives for becoming an author. It would be absurd to pretend that

fame had no charms for me; but I can say, with truth, that fame, for its own sake, forms no part of my calculations, or of the reward I aspire to as the summit of my wishes.'

" ' I have no right to pry into your motives,' said Lady Nugent; ' you may have purposes to serve of which I should be a very incompetent judge, but I must again caution you against expecting too much, if your views are pecuniary: for I assure you it will be a very difficult matter to find a publisher, just now, who will take the risk of this work upon himself. Perhaps I mistake you—is it your intention to publish on your own account?'

" ' By no means.'

" ' You wish to sell the copyright of your book?'

" ' I do.'

" Her ladyship looked very distrustful of success—she bit her lip, and again glanced through the manuscript.

" ' If you will trust your treasure with me

for one day,' said she, 'I will make a few trifling alterations ; and although I will not venture to supplant your ' Solitary ' with the more attractive appellation of ' the steam engine,' I think I can make some of the titles of the minor pieces more attractive.'

" I thanked her with all my heart, and I think she was struck with my sincerity, for she held out her hand, and, calling me by my name, assured me that it was not often she could afford to take so much trouble for a stranger.

" ' I have been fortunate,' said I, ' most fortunate, in obtaining the introduction of Elliott Lee.'

" ' You are more fortunate,' she observed, (and I never shall forget the flattery of those words) ' in possessing a countenance unsullied with the stain of evil passions, and an eye that looks as if it never knew deceit.'

" ' Add to the small list of my merits,' I replied, ' a heart that knows how to appre-

ciate the kindness it never can deserve—still less repay.’

“Again her fine countenance wore that peculiar smile, which no words can describe, and with repeated assurances of my gratitude, I took my leave ; for other visitors were at this moment announced, and I felt that I had already encroached, perhaps too much upon her time.

“My manuscript was sent to me on the following day, with some alterations, suggested by a brighter genius than my own, accompanied also with a letter of introduction to a publisher of whom I had never heard before. And you may be sure I hastened to avail myself of this good fortune.

“Messrs. Bell and Simpson, to whose house I was directed, are, as I learned afterwards, rising men ; though not so firmly established, as to turn a deaf ear to any recommendation from authority so high as that of Lady Nugent, even where it promises little in the way of pecuniary profit.

“It was curious to observe the difference in the countenance of Mr. Bell when he bowed to me as a stranger, and when he bowed to me after reading Lady Nugent’s note. Motioning for me to follow him into a more private room, I ascended the circular stairs, leading out of the shop, and sat down with him in an apartment, where many a poor author besides myself has doubtless received his doom.

“I had not seen the contents of the note Mr. Bell still held in his hand, but I knew they must be satisfactory, by the bland and conciliatory smiles with which he anticipated the opening of my business. I translated the expression of his face into numbers, rather than words. First, I thought he looked as if he would give me fifty pounds for my book ; then a hundred ; and as his fingers seemed to tingle with the charmed lines they could not relinquish, my calculations upon his liberality rose still higher.

“‘Two hundred pounds will be sufficient to convey Cathleen to Italy,’ thought I, ‘where I

shall soon write another book of poems, that will be sure to prosper upon the fame of this.' But it was time to come to realities. I told Mr. Bell it was my wish to sell the copyright of my work, and asked him, in plain terms, how much he would give for it.

"‘Give!’ said Mr. Bell, and for an instant he ceased to smile. ‘It is a great thing,’ he continued, ‘for an untried author—an author without a name, to get his works out free of risk; and but for the offer of Lady Nugent, in whose acquaintance you are most fortunate, it would have been impossible for us to do anything for you just now. Trade, you must be aware, is very flat at this time of the year—extremely flat; and poetry, besides, is an article for which there is no demand, even when the season is more propitious. But after her ladyship’s proposition, we can have no objection to print your book.’

"‘I have not seen Lady Nugent’s note,’ said I, ‘nor am I aware of the nature of the proposition to which you allude.’

“Mr. Bell handed me the note, and I read with great astonishment, that a lady, who, until yesterday, was ignorant of the fact of my existence, had, purely out of the generosity of her own heart, offered to secure Messrs. Bell and Simpson against the probable loss attendant upon the publication of my book. I know not whether I was most chagrined at the confidence with which this loss was spoken of, or charmed with an instance of such unexpected kindness from a distinguished stranger; but certainly the former feeling remained with me long after the other had ceased to afford any lively satisfaction.

“‘Lady Nugent,’ said I, ‘deserves the applause of her countrymen, as much for her nobleness of heart, as for the superiority of her talent.’

“‘She does,’ responded my companion; and once more we proceeded to business.

“‘With regard to the copyright of my work,’ I said, ‘I must ask again how much you can afford to give? I have no wish to be

unreasonable, but I assure you, sir, I do not publish merely for fame.'

" 'I, too, would be reasonable,' replied Mr. Bell, 'and to a friend of Lady Nugent's, would almost venture beyond what is just to myself and my partner; but, sir, you must be aware that for a young author to get his book out at all, insured as you are from loss, he ought to consider himself a fortunate man—most fortunate in the present times. The mere printing of this work will be expensive, and the advertising prodigiously so, in comparison with the price of the book.'

"I urged him again to name his terms.

" 'Well, sir,' said he, taking in a long breath as if to support him through this unwonted effort of generosity, 'I will give you, as a friend of Lady Nugent's, fifteen pounds; but it will be so much out of my own pocket.'

" 'Fifteen pounds!' I exclaimed, and was about to add, 'and Cathleen dying!' but fortunately I did not altogether take leave of

my senses, and recollecting from the tenor of Lady Nugent's note, as well as her previous conversation, that there really was little chance of profit to any one in this affair, I had nearly bargained the man up to twenty pounds, with which sum I determined to be satisfied, when our *tête-à-tête* was interrupted, and Mr. Bell politely pressed me to walk forward into his own house, communicating with the apartment we then occupied.

“I followed him mechanically, for I cared not where I went. All the world was the same to me, except that particular portion of it from which I was shut out—the world of clear skies, and genial airs—the world of happiness, I had too fondly pictured with Cathleen.

“I did not think it possible I could be roused, as I was the next moment, and that by the worst of human passions. Yes, Mary, I was, I believe for the first time in my life, guilty of the sin of envy; for there I beheld, in the domestic apartment of the man who had just

been offering me fifteen pounds to save the best and the loveliest of women from an early grave: I beheld around me every comfort, every ornament, every luxury, that gold could purchase; and in the centre of this gorgeous scene, embedded in a richly cushioned sofa that looked as if it might supply a second youth to age, a tall, stout, well-made woman, the very personification of exuberant health.

“My companion introduced this lady with great satisfaction, as his wife, and after adding a few words in a whisper, we were left alone.

“After repeated and earnest endeavours, I found it impossible to raise the price of my luckless poems higher than twenty pounds, and with that agreement we separated; but not before I had again looked grudgingly around the room, and thought how much it contained of which poor Cathleen was in need.

“My business here is ended now, Mary, for the proof sheets of my work can be sent to me in the country; and I hasten away from this

great Babel, like one who escapes from prison into the free, pure air. Would that I could return to you with a lighter heart!

“ Struck with the vanity of all human hopes and attainments, I sink even below myself, questioning perpetually whether, even if I had been more fortunate, I should have been more happy. Yes, Mary, I am convinced that I should, for I am not morose, or misanthropic. It is more peculiarly my fault to be too much elated with the little good that falls in my way. Can this be the reason why it is so sparingly scattered? I have thanked Heaven a thousand times for granting to me, as my inalienable portion of felicity, the blessing of Cathleen’s love. Must I live to find this love my bane, and to wish that I had never known so sweet a dream? Must I live to see her fade away like a blighted flower in a parched and arid land, when the rains and the dews are falling all around—but not on her? No, Mary; I shall never live to see this day. If Cathleen must die, and that

in these cold regions, and for want of the means to transport her to a happier sphere, I have a strong presentiment that I shall die before her—a presentiment arising, no doubt, out of a sense of my utter inability to sit and watch her wasting day by day, and perishing for that gold which thousands are squandering away without benefit to themselves or others.

“ But enough of this, at least until we meet, which will be on Saturday at the latest. In the mean time, and ever, believe me,” &c. &c. &c.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Allan Grey returned to the cold welcome of his home, he found that clouds, still darker than when he left, were hanging on his father's brow, for he had committed an act of enormity, as unpardonable as that of open rebellion—he had dared to act independently, and to take an important step in life without his father's sanction.

Had Stephen Grey been consulted on the subject of his son's proceedings, Allan knew perfectly well that he should only have been scorned, thwarted, or reproached; and therefore, cherishing, as he did, a fixed resolution, founded, as he believed, on the best and high-

est principles, he had deemed it wiser to spare his own feelings and those of his family, by avoiding all contention between his father's prejudices and his own will. He had left his sister Mary to explain his reasons for acting as he did, as well as to vindicate his cause, if any happy moment should occur, when his father should appear disposed to listen favourably.

This duty Mary faithfully performed ; but she might as well have spent her eloquence upon the winds or waves, for the impression was already made upon her father's mind, and he was so ignorant of the real character of his son, that to all she said, he answered, " It is his own proud and wilful temper that makes him shake off all parental authority ;" or, " He holds himself so distinct and separate from me, that his own counsels may henceforth be his guide, and his own means his support ;" with many variations of the same never-ending strain of accusation, reproach, and denunciation against the offender ; who, when he re-

turned with heavy heart and disappointed hopes, was made to feel, by all the force of cold looks and repulsive tones, that he was an unwelcome addition to his father's board.

It was but natural, under such circumstances, that he should frequently absent himself and repair to the Abbey, where kindness ever awaited him ; yet, when he did so, his absence was construed into a crime : for, why did he leave his father's house to live upon those who were comparatively strangers, and whose means were barely sufficient for themselves ? In short, whatever Allan did was wrong ; and he, whose nature was but too generous and too sensitive to bear with fortitude the common discipline of life, was perpetually spoken of by the parent, who ought to have known him better, as if he were a low, mean, unprincipled wretch, eating the bread of idleness ; and doing nothing to entitle him to a place in the community of rational or respectable beings.

Previous to Allan's departure from home, he had been so accustomed to the daily contemplation of Cathleen's enfeebled and emaciated form, as scarcely to observe the progress of her malady ; but during his absence, especially while hope yet dawned upon him, he had thought of her so entirely as she had been, and as he fondly hoped she still might be, that he was scarcely prepared to find her the weak and suffering invalid she really was. The summer, too, was past the meridian of its glory ; and the fading roses warned him that if any steps were taken to save her, they must be sure and speedy.

There is a hope—there is, at least, a fluttering of the heart too much like hope, arising solely out of our inability to believe the worst ; and every time a fresh sheet of Allan's poems made its appearance, and he read, with additional facility, the smooth and flowing verse, he persuaded himself, and Cathleen added conviction to his belief, that other eyes

in the world would read those lines with admiration as intense as hers.

He had himself a clear and melodious voice, and whatever he felt interested in, he read with peculiar grace and feeling ; and Cathleen, shut out as she was from many familiar and accustomed sources of enjoyment, learned to anticipate the hour of rehearsal with more than the poet's ardour ; for seldom was the smile of her genuine admiration awarded, when Allan did not turn to her with fresh and fond assurances that she was herself the inspiration of his genius, the only star that directed him amongst the doubts and the difficulties of his adventurous course.

In the mean time a totally different scene was in preparation at Welbourne House, where Harriet Grey was expected to become once more an inmate, for a short time previous to her marriage ; and Mary, determined not to anticipate the worst, began with cheerfulness and alacrity to make the necessary arrange-

ments, gladly persuading herself, simply on the ground that no woman of delicacy could marry the man she did not love, that Mr. Maxwell's picture had been drawn by an exaggerating hand, and that her sister was, in sober earnest, making no real sacrifice. The last words of her letter, however, continued to recur to her mind, but they might have been written in a low mood ; for she could easily believe that the prospect of marriage, under the most favourable circumstances, had much to excite sad thoughts and serious apprehensions.

Harriet's letters to her sister were now too short to elicit any kind of truth, except what she often repeated, that she was hurried almost out of her life with dress-makers, trades-people,—every thing to attend to ; and although she complained bitterly, it was evidently a state of excitement by no means at variance with her natural taste. For Harriet, deep in the rivalry of caps and bonnets, and conversant in all the mysteries of lace and jewels, was at any

time willing to put up with a "golden grief;" and would freely bargain for a secret sorrow, provided she might shelter it beneath a satin cloak. To be the wife of the richest, and at the same time the most ostentatious man in the town of —— had many charms for her. In giving away her hand, she therefore only stipulated that it should be graced with a diamond ring, and that if in after years she bewailed the loss of her liberty, she might weep beneath curtains of heavier folds, and of more costly texture, than those of Sir Henry Belgrave, member for the county.

Nor was Harriet alone to blame for the frivolity which marked her character. Unacquainted with happiness of any higher grade than fashion, frolic, and ample means afforded, she could not believe that when once the wife of Mr. Maxwell, it would be possible for her to be *very* wretched; but she deeply felt the difficulty of going through the solemn ceremony with such a man, in the face of her

family and friends ; and this was probably the reason why she deferred her return home from week to week, on the plea of important business that must be attended to.

At last, however, no excuse being left her, she came to the dreaded home, whose cold and uniform austerity had determined her to leave it for ever ; and her return having been so long delayed, as to leave little space between that and the time proposed for her marriage, Mr. Maxwell, and Mrs. Hilary her aunt, were pressed to accompany her, and to take up their abode at Welbourne House, until the eventful day, to which all parties looked forward with the interest commonly attached to the first wedding in a family.

Had either Mary or her father known the domestic care and anxiety which Mr. Maxwell's presence would bring along with it, they would probably have been more sparing of their hospitality ; for the palate of the portly alderman had been pampered, until there were few homely viands for which it found a relish,

and Welbourne House was never famous for the bodily indulgences it afforded.

Mrs. Hilary, however, richly supplied, in her own person, the two distinct places of an experienced mistress and an able cook ; for she was deeply read in soups and gravies, and had a recipe for making every thing in a cheap and ready way.

On the score of trouble, Mary had no wish to spare herself. She would even have found all her trouble converted into pleasure, had her future brother been a different man. But, alas for poor Harriet, however imposing his figure might be when driving his fat ponies, or presiding in his own proper element at a civic feast, the formal, cold atmosphere of Welbourne House, where everybody seemed to be at once thrown upon their own internal resources, proved such a trial as he was in no way calculated to sustain. Indeed, there is something in this kind of country life, which few characters have stamina sufficient to support successfully.

The world may applaud those who can figure

in a brilliant circle ; but gratitude and admiration should both be awarded to the companion who can enliven a long afternoon in the country, without pictures, and without music.

Harriet had stepped first from the carriage on arriving at her father's door. Her air was more flippant than usual ; and such was her eagerness about trunks and bandboxes, and the treasures they contained, that Mary began to think she should never catch her sister's eye, and still less her ear.

Aunt Hilary had come next, a lady whom Mary felt no predisposition to like ; but she had greeted her with such perfect cordiality, appearing at the same time to be on such good terms with herself and every one around her, that it needed more spleen than Mary possessed, to quarrel with her everlasting good humour.

Some time was required for Mr. Maxwell to be dislodged from the vehicle in which he seemed to have taken root ; for in addition to his ponderous weight, he had lost much of the

alacrity of his youth ; and, as Mrs. Hilary whispered apart to her expectant niece, he had lately had certain twinges of the gout.

Mr. Maxwell saluted both Mary and Ellen with the familiarity of a brother ; and it would have been difficult at that moment to say which face wore the deepest crimson, or whether the glow on Ellen's cheek arose more from secret indignation at being compelled to share in this ceremony, or suppressed laughter at beholding Mary subjected to the same fate.

It was now evident that Harriet had exaggerated but little in her descriptions of her future husband. The alderman had been, some twenty years ago, exactly what milkmaids and washerwomen would call a remarkably handsome man ; for his complexion was fair and ruddy, his hair bright and curling, with a little inclination to forsake the crown of the head ; his eyes lively, twinkling, and full of laughter ; and when he spoke or smiled, which he mostly did together, he displayed at full length an

even set of pearly teeth. What could the fastidious fancy of man or woman wish for more? And then his wardrobe! Money could not purchase cloth more soft and silken to the touch, than that which shielded his person from the cold, nor could the snows of Chimborazo rival the whiteness of his linen. It needed but a slight acquaintance to see that his heart was in these things, and to know that in order to make him feel at home, and tolerably contented with his situation, it would be necessary to surround him with all appliances and means for bodily enjoyment.

There is a burden—a sense of uneasiness, in the company of such men as these, when removed entirely out of their proper element, and Mary actually trembled when Mr. Maxwell seated himself in her father's straight-backed comfortless arm chair, and looked around upon their homely parlour, affording not so much as the common luxury of a sofa.

In the mean time, however, it was concluded

between Mrs. Hilary and Harriet, who were in earnest consultation upstairs, that during the gentleman's stay it would be highly advisable to occupy the drawing room, an apartment one degree better furnished than the parlour; and although Stephen Grey particularly objected to this room, on account of its ministering too much to the gratification of the senses, Mrs. Hilary undertook to appease his anger, if the girls would but make all things ready. "Besides," she added, with a twinkling glance at Harriet, "we shall of course want two apartments, for people under certain circumstances sometimes relish a *tête-à-tête* better than one would suppose from seeing how distant they can be in company."

Harriet looked as if long usage had enabled her to endure such remarks as this without feeling; and the busy little woman went on, anticipating, adjusting, and, as she believed, reconciling all things. For Mrs. Hilary was one of those exceedingly agreeable people who

will by main force unravel every mystery, redress every grievance, dive to the bottom of every dilemma, and if there be a cloudy brow in their presence, will attack it with direct and pointed questions about its right to be so; if there be a sorrowful countenance, will bid it brighten up; and if there be an attempt at concealment, will pounce upon the suspected party, and drag the hidden thing to light.

All this she did with a professed determination to make people happy, for she had no idea of the nonsensical fancies about which half the world was miserable. Her principle of action was, that with a full explanation, and a clear understanding, all will go well; but she did not take into her account, that there are people who will not explain, and others who cannot understand; and therefore she as often made mischief with her ill-judged open dealing, as many other people who have neither the same inclination, nor the same good-will.

For instance, when Miss Marriott, her

neighbour's daughter, lamented her inability to give any thing to the Bible Society, because of the limited allowance her father granted to his children ; she immediately appealed to the father, who had always allowed his daughter a yearly sum for charitable purposes, which Miss Marriott grudged, and gave, with no little spite, to Mrs. Hilary ever afterwards.

Or when her little friend the doctor, assured her he should be most happy to join her card parties, but that, between themselves, his lady had a particular objection to his attending evening parties ; away she flew to the doctor's wife, who, from that time, compelled her husband to go and risk his money, without, as some say, sweetening his disappointment by a welcome home.

Or when Mr. Simpkin, a precise bachelor of fifty, complained, in consequence of her frequent inquiries why he did not marry, that no kind lady would smile on him ; she worked in secret upon the tender heart of Miss Dinah

Peebles, a spinster well stricken in years, and having obtained what she considered a blushing, but tacit consent, hastened to communicate her success to the astonished bachelor, who left the town by an early stage the following morning, and never afterwards returned to claim the lady's hand.

Such were the prompt, but ill-appreciated interferences, which obtained for Mrs. Hilary the name of busy-body, with many other titles equally degrading; and all from her strenuous endeavours to set things right. It would have been a useful lesson, could the worthy woman have learned that mankind, for the most part, would much rather be miserable in their own way, than happy in yours; but she knew nothing of mankind beyond appearances, and these she thought were in favour of some active and efficient agent, being diligently employed in promoting private and individual good.

It was impossible for two people to meet, whose mode of acting was more dissimilar than that of Mrs. Hilary and her sage brother-in-

law, Stephen Grey. One looking to happiness alone, and the other as exclusively to propriety, they each missed their aim through a total ignorance of the nature of the human mind, and of the different characters with whom they came in contact: for while Mrs. Hilary was regarded as a general bore, Stephen Grey was perpetually driving people to extremes, by his endeavours to force them into a middle, or what he termed, a *decent* course.

On the present occasion, it needed all his good humour, added to the internal satisfaction afforded by the eligible match his daughter was about to make, to reconcile him to the endurance of such a guest; for, regarding his assumed dignity no more than the petulance of a spoiled child, Mrs. Hilary made no scruple of plying him with the most direct and familiar questions, of dragging his peculiarities to light, and of reducing him, in all respects, to the level of a common man.

The warm and sisterly salute with which she greeted him, evidently to his great annoy-

ance, on his first appearance, threw Harriet into a fit of laughter, from which she scarcely recovered through the remainder of the evening, for every circumstance that occurred, seemed to add fresh stimulus to her mirth. The figure of Mr. Maxwell seated opposite to her father, was of itself a fund of entertainment; the one, rosy, round, and comfortable, seeming to settle as it were into himself; while the other, tall, spare, erect, and pale, looked with his cold blue eyes, for the words of wisdom he expected to issue from the lips of his future son.

For the first evening all went well, for Mr. Maxwell plunged, as he was wont, into the history of his own life, telling how he had been a poor apprentice—how he had worked his way by care and industry, step by step, up to his present eminence; and thus confirming, before the assembled family of the Greys, the truths they heard repeated every day, of the importance of habits of economy and application to business; while their father, delighted

with the edifying narrative, looked round at intervals with an expression of countenance that seemed to say, "Behold the happy consequences of the system I constantly recommend."

In compliment to his sister, Allan Grey had remained at home that day, and to him, especially, his father's glances were directed, with something of an invidious comparison between his pale, delicate-looking, useless son, and the important man of industry and wealth.

It is true his admiration received a damp on hearing that this man, who, by his own confession, had endured so many privations and hardships in his youth, now needed all the bodily indulgences of an eastern nabob; and when Mrs. Hilary, in their first private conference hinted to him the necessity of supplying his house with many articles of luxury hitherto unknown within its walls, especially when he found that copious libations of his best brandy were essential to the comfort and contentment

of his guest, he seriously questioned, in his own mind, whether Mr. Maxwell could be a man of such sound sense and propriety of feeling as he had given him credit for ; nor was it until after repeated calculations as to the sum he had actually amassed, and that which it seemed probable he would expend yearly, that his prejudices gave way beneath the weight of gold, and he cordially acknowledged as his son the man whose habits and character would have marked him out for his contempt, had they been unaccompanied by the single faculty of acquiring wealth.

On the second day after Harriet's arrival at home, while the older branches of the family were closely engaged in the important business of settling money affairs, Mary and her two sisters stole away to the Abbey, leaving Mrs. Hilary in attendance upon the gentlemen, and charging her with the best excuses they could think of in case of their absence being observed.

Terence Malone, whose raillery Harriet

dreaded more than she was willing to confess, having already been introduced to her future husband, she felt at liberty to laugh once more, for this was the greatest trial she had imagined to herself whenever she thought of showing off Mr. Maxwell to her friends ; and, as the three sisters wound their way together to the familiar scene of almost all their early enjoyments, she felt as if life—even married life, might yet have some sunny pictures to present.

Cathleen had that day descended to the common sitting room, where she occupied an easy chair beside a fire, which, even at this season of the year was necessary to render the Abbey a suitable habitation for an invalid. Dressed in her usually simple, but elegant manner, with her long fair hair curling in ringlets around her snowy neck and forehead, with the brilliance of feverish excitement in her eyes, and the fatal hectic on her cheek, she looked like some bright being from another world, bound on an embassy of love and charity to this, and ready to pass away again into a

more congenial and a happier sphere. With her own hands she had just arranged a splendid bouquet of flowers, gathered for her by Terence; and one delicate and fading rose, too true an emblem of herself, she still held in her long thin fingers, that trembled with the quick pulsations of her throbbing heart.

It is scarcely possible to realize the idea that death is near, when youth, and beauty, and the love of life, combine to impart intensity to the exercise of every faculty, and vividness to every charm.

Mary looked upon this lovely picture, and her heart ached for her brother Allan. Even Harriet was grave, and when she had pressed a kiss upon the cheek of the fair sufferer, she turned in mimic ecstasy to the flowers Cathleen had just been arranging, that she might dash away the gathering tears from her eyes.

It was an evening of deep interest and expectation to all who participated in the hopes of the young poet, for a messenger sent to the neighbouring town was to return with the first

copy of *the book*. And who is so dull, so unambitious, so insensible, as not to experience a sense of exaltation on beholding for the first time, the effusions of his own, or even of a well-known and congenial mind, consolidated into a compact and perfect volume?

Neither Allan nor his friends were unmoved by the natural excitement of this moment. The packet arrived before the party separated—nay, even before Cathleen had begun to yield to the languor of exhaustion. There were several copies of the work sent down, and all were opened, and examined, with intense interest; but by none were they so fondly—so affectionately regarded, as by her who felt with the writer that perfect union of soul, constituting something like a right of possession in all to which the emotions of that congenial soul give birth.

“I know—” exclaimed Cathleen, clasping the volume in her hands, while a prophetic ardour animated her beautiful countenance, “I feel that in these pages lies the blessing of

my life. Allan, the world will now know that you are a poet, and your name will be upon the lips of thousands, who, if they were aware that a poor Irish girl had ever been so fortunate as to inspire your genius, would esteem her the most enviable and the happiest of women."

"Hush, Cathleen," said Allan, "you are a partial judge;" and he replaced the cushions from which in the ecstasy of the moment she had risen; and gathered up the rose-bud she had let fall in her eagerness to seize the volumes.

"Ah, Cathleen," said he, "you are a cruel mistress! Your rose has faded already."

She looked up faintly, for the momentary excitement was over. "*We* may destroy," said she, gazing mournfully upon the flower, "but who shall restore?"

"There is one," replied Allan, "who can restore. There is one whose blessing may yet be ours."

They were conversing in those low tones so sacred to affection, and Cathleen answered, "I

know it. And in this blessing I trust for my happiness—for my life. But Mary tells me we should pray for it; and that if the answer to our prayers should be death instead of life, we should be equally satisfied that it is sent in mercy. Oh, Allan, do you think that if I were compelled to exchange your love for the grave—for the cold, the solitary grave, I should be resigned?”

“I hope so, Cathleen, for resignation is the gift of Heaven. But we will not talk of this now; rather let us calculate upon the reception this little volume may meet with from the world; and how, when once established as an author, I may live with you in Italy in a cottage, never mind how humble, at the foot of a mountain, looking over one of those calm beautiful lakes, of which you are so often dreaming.”

“Ah! that is the life for me!” sighed the poor invalid. “But hark! what has Terence found?”

A loud exclamation at that moment arose

from the party around the table ; for amongst the advertisements of books, and other loose papers accompanying the volumes, a review, containing a notice of Allan's poems, was discovered. It was a number of that which the two families at Welbourne House and the Abbey had contributed to pay for, and for the last three years its pages had been the only vehicle of literary information to which they had constant and immediate access.

The contributors to such periodicals can have little idea how the isolated inhabitants of the country are capable of attaching themselves to a volume of this kind, looking upon it in the character of a social and intelligent guest, whom they receive with a never-tiring welcome. Under such circumstances, the character of the review becomes in a manner identified with that of its readers, and they learn to praise or blame in conjunction with this silent oracle, whose infallibility they seldom presume to doubt.

After such an ideal intimacy, and real

correspondence of feeling had existed for years between our poet and his review, there could be no wonder that he should imagine himself entitled to look to its influential pages, for an example of the patronage he ardently anticipated from the world. He knew that he and his friends had spared their mite from scanty means to pay for it, that they had perused its records diligently, and with implicit faith in the facts and sentiments they contained; and in return for the cordial reception it had ever found amongst them, he thought himself fully entitled to look for the support and the countenance of a friend.

“Good people all,” exclaimed Terence in a loud voice, “Mary—Harriet—Ellen—be still if you can, and listen to me; and you whispering lovers, hearken one moment to the oracle of Apollo.” He then cleared his voice, folded back the opposite page, and began to read with slow and studied emphasis—“The Solitary and other Poems, by Allan Grey.”

Here Terence cleared his voice again, adjusted the leaves of the book, and with tantalizing deliberation looked round upon his audience, as if to ascertain whether a proper degree of attention was written upon every face.

Silence and eager expectation reigned throughout, for there was not one who doubted that the oracle would be propitious. Terence read on.

“It is again our painful duty,” said the benevolent reviewer, “to warn the inexperienced writer against trusting such poems as the ‘Solitary,’ beyond the circle of his own particular friends, where they may be read with pleasure, and at least approved, for the purity of sentiment conspicuous in every line. Had the author of this well intended volume devoted his respectable talents, and his kindly feelings, to objects of more substantial usefulness than the writing of very moderate poetry, he might have been a wiser, and perhaps a *richer* man.”

“What can the scoundrel mean !” exclaimed Terence, entirely at a loss how to account for this extraordinary event ; while Harriet snatched the pamphlet from his hand to see whether he had read aright, and Mary, too, looked earnestly over the page, for they could not help suspecting he had been sporting with their eager hopes.

It was but too true ; and when Allan, in his turn, held out his hand for the volume, his countenance wore that melancholy and imploring smile that wrings the heart with pity. He bent over the page as if the fatal words had been written in some foreign character which he could with difficulty decipher ; and as he read the passage again and again, as if determined to drink in its whole bitterness, Cathleen, rising silently from her chair, advanced towards him, and leaning over his shoulder, fixed her beautiful eyes upon the same dark sentence.

It was but too easy to comprehend ; and with the true heart of woman, she gently

pressed her cheek to that of the soul-stricken poet, as if she blushed not to acknowledge before the world, that he was dearest in his hour of degradation ; or as if with the very strength of her affection, she could shelter him from every wound the cruel world might inflict.

Allan felt her half embrace—he felt her tears descending, and he felt, too, how faithful and how noble is the love of woman ; but along with this conviction, came a sense of the stern necessity of losing all.

“I never knew before,” said he, “that words could kill.” And looking up into the pale sad countenance that still bent over him, “Cathleen,” he added in a voice of agony, “it is all over now ! You must look to Heaven for your support, but not to me.”

CHAPTER VI.

ALTHOUGH the friends of Allan Grey were acquainted with the nature of the hopes he had been cherishing, they were scarcely aware, until the evening of the scene we have just described, of the depth of feeling which such a disappointment as he had met with, was calculated to produce; and while they were all inspired with the same disposition to assist him, the impossibility of compassing the necessary means, imposed silence upon every tongue.

Terence at last proposed that Mary should appeal to her father; and Mary, conscious of the hopelessness of such an undertaking, hinted

that perhaps Mr. Maxwell might be willing to advance a sum of money on behalf of Harriet's brother.

"After all," said Terence in despair, "it is not borrowed money that can lighten the burden of Allan's grief or ours. He must either find the means of providing for himself and Cathleen, or he must break his heart, and the poor girl must die."

With the kindest wishes, it was impossible to do anything in so difficult a case, and the melancholy party separated for the night; when Allan, after assisting Cathleen to her chamber, had returned to accompany his sisters home.

Delicacy forbade the slightest allusion in his presence, to the subject of their late conversation; but Mary, who felt it her peculiar duty to seek the solitary sufferer, and freely express her willingness, though she might want the power, to serve him, arose early the next morning, and tapping gently at her brother's

door, found him already dressed, and ready to receive her.

He was seated by a table, with the review open before him; while his own neglected poems lay upon the floor, as if they had been dashed to the ground by an indignant hand.

“ You have risen betimes this morning, Allan,” said Mary.

He smiled, and looked towards the bed, which had not been disturbed; and when Mary thought how he must have been employed during the long night, but especially when she marked her brother’s haggard countenance, his hollow eye, his weary brow, his feverish cheek, and his parched and burning lips, tears of sympathy and tenderness rushed into her eyes, to think of the melancholy wreck one weary night had made.

“ Allan,” said she, looking earnestly in his face,—“ dear Allan, you are not well.”

“ I told you,” said he, with a mournful smile, “ that I should not outlive Cathleen; but my

hour is not yet come. Nay, do not look so grave, Mary. I was but jesting. Such nights as I have spent, are apt to make people nervous. But I will endeavour to shake it off and be cheerful ; for you know we have a wedding on the way, and Mrs. Hilary told me last night for my peculiar satisfaction, that my father intends to give Harriet a portion of five hundred pounds. It is not much ; but oh, Mary !” and he grasped his sister’s hand in a convulsion of agony, “if my father can spare this sum for one child who does not need it, might he not spare half as much for one who does ?”

“I think he might,” replied Mary, trembling at the question of how it could be obtained.

“Oh, Mary !” continued Allan, “I have had such dark and dismal thoughts through the whole of this long night ! I have been filled with all bad passions : envy, revenge, and desperation ! And once I had resolved upon ridding the world of me and my sufferings, when

the form of Cathleen seemed to kneel before me, imploring me not to imbitter her last hours."

"Allan," said his sister in a firm and serious voice, "did you not once through this melancholy night reflect, that the eye of a merciful God was upon you; and that each separate pang from which your wounded spirit shrunk, was measured out by his hand, and proportioned to your capacity of suffering, as well as your necessity of discipline?"

"I thought of all this, Mary; but what avails it for my consolation, if it be necessary for my punishment, or my discipline as you call it, that Cathleen must die?"

"It avails but little, if you would presume to stipulate with heaven for certain blessings of your own choosing, and without which you are determined to serve neither God nor man; but if you are willing to submit your own judgment of what is best for you, to that of an infallible and omnipresent mind, it will at all

times afford you support and consolation to remember, that you are subject to the counsels of that mind, whose wisdom comprehends our meanest faculties, as well as our most aspiring hopes."

"Mary, you talk like one who stands aloof from a shipwreck, and philosophizes upon the combined influence of the winds and waves, while the wretched crew are perishing."

"Do I, Allan, talk so coldly, and to so little purpose?"

"Yes. Because God has been good to you, and to Mr. Maxwell, and to half the world, you would persuade the other half, and me, the most miserable being it contains, that the same goodness extends alike to all."

"Allan, it is not like you to speak in this way. If your idea of divine goodness comprises only the gift of temporal blessings, or the things we set our hearts upon, I think you need hardly have pointed me out as an instance of unbounded indulgence. But if it extends,

as it ought, to blessings of a higher and more spiritual nature, I do cheerfully acknowledge that God has been good to me, in giving me a confidence in his wisdom, and a hope in his mercy."

"Mary, forgive me!" said Allan, extending his hand. "I forgot for a moment how much my poor sister had done, and suffered for us all."

"Speak not of that now, dear Allan. It is not worth a thought in comparison with your griefs. No; add to it if you will some secret crosses of which we all have our share, and I shall still esteem my earthly portion happy when compared with yours. It is not—believe me, it is not, because I cannot feel for you, that I have wearied you with empty words. It is rather because of the deep waters into which you have fallen, that I would point out the consolations of Heaven; for truly this earth is dark and desolate to you."

"But what will Heaven do for me, Mary,

unless I could say in sincerity of heart, ‘not my will, but thine be done?’ ”

“Is it then so hard a thing to think that Cathleen is going before you to a better land? when you are tried and tempted in this, to think that she will soon be inhabiting a world of light and glory, where temptations never come?”

“Yes, Mary, it is too hard for me. For before these thoughts, come cold sad pictures of the grave—the worm, and all dark images of loathsomeness and horror, from which our very nature shrinks; and I look out upon the sunshine, and the flowers, and see the happier denizens of nature luxuriating in the sultry hours of summer; while she who is so formed for the enjoyment of all things social, sweet, and lovely, is passing away into the land of darkness, and the shadow of death.

“This I would bear, at least I would try to bear it, if I had done all within the compass of human means to save her. But oh, Mary,

to sit idly by, and watch her shrinking and shivering before the blast!—I cannot—no, I will not endure it!”

Mary folded her arms around her brother’s neck, and warned him with a voice scarcely audible, that he was speaking blasphemously. “You have done all,” she added, “within the compass of *your* powers—you have exercised the faculties which God has given you—the rest is with heaven.”

“And because the innocent and the beautiful is sacrificed to the vengeance of Heaven, I must be satisfied!”

“Allan, I must again implore you to remember that God is good, and that if Cathleen should be taken away from you, it may be to make her a thousand times more happy than you could make her here. There is a love, dear Allan, that can be satisfied with the felicity of its object. I know there is.”

“That love I fear is not mine,” said Allan,

with a sigh that told how his heart was yearning for its secret idols—for the peculiar portion it had selected for its own enjoyment.

“No, it is woman’s love,” said Mary. “But you are a poet, and ought to possess an imagination fertile as a woman’s.”

“It is fertile in producing images of death, and horror—it is fertile in beautifying the paradise from which I am shut out.”

“Oh, Allan, how will you answer to the God who gave you all things, for having used this faculty to the destruction of the high and spiritual enjoyment for which it was designed? what avails the genius of the poet, if he cannot fertilize and beautify the borders of the celestial city—if he cannot people the habitations of the blessed, with beings brighter and more glorious than ever walked this earth—if he cannot fill with images of happiness and hope, the regions of eternal peace?

“It is not the least merit of our holy religion, that it affords an useful, pure, and benignant

channel for the exercise of every mental faculty, and opens for imagination a boundless field, where, for every bitter weed you are now gathering, you might find ten thousand flowers.

“Think of these things, my brother, for this is your hour of darkness—your hour of need. Think of these things, and let your thoughts become prayers; for there never yet was an horizon so dark, but that humble heart-felt prayer could lift the veil, and penetrate beyond.”

“I have prayed,” said Allan, in a voice of utter despondency: “in the silent midnight hours, when happier beings than myself were sleeping—I have prayed for Cathleen with floods of burning tears, and yet you see—you know that she is dying.”

“Alas, my brother, it is not when we ask in the strength of our own determination, and the ardour of our own desires, for one particular blessing, that prayer avails to smooth the ruggedness of our earthly path.”

“Then how should I pray, Mary?”

“You should pray that your spiritual, rather than your temporal, wants may be supplied.”

“And will the temporal things I want be sure to follow?”

“That is more than I will dare to promise; but one happy consequence will follow—you will be able to do without them, if they are not necessary for your eternal good.”

“Then for what would you recommend that I should pray?”

“I would first recommend you to ask of your own heart, in what religious duty it is wanting; and if I mistake not, you will see abundant cause to pray for resignation.”

“I believe I should. But I would first try some other means to accomplish my purpose; and then, when all have failed—when I have nothing more to love, or fear, or hope for, I will pray for resignation to reconcile me to my fate.”

“Suppose, Allan, you were, in the first instance, to pray for resignation; would it

hinder you from making use of the same means?"

"No! but I could not pray with sincerity, while one ray of hope was left me."

"You have pronounced a terrible sentence upon yourself, Allan. You have proved that it is necessary for you to be deprived of every hope, before you will direct your thoughts and your affections into their proper channel. How many heart-aches might be spared—how many tears of bitterness—how many sleepless nights, if we would but turn our thoughts to God, before our early hopes were extinguished!"

Mary and her brother were now silent, for she feared to press this subject farther, while his spirit writhed beneath its recent wounds; at last she broke the current of his gloomy reflections, by asking him if there was any way in which she could serve him, or if he had thought of any plan of action which she could help to forward.

"I have fixed upon nothing," said he. "I

am distracted with confused and hurried thoughts, that will not resolve themselves into a plan."

"Like you," said Mary, "I have spent the greatest part of the past night in thinking of your present distressing situation; and like you without being able to discover any means of alleviating your anxiety. Unless, indeed, you will allow us to apply to Mr. Maxwell, who, we understand, is liberal as well as rich."

Allan was silent and thoughtful for some time. "When I think of Cathleen," said he, "I am humbled down to that state in which we are willing either to beg or borrow; but when I think of the impossibility of my assisting her in any other capacity than that of her husband, I feel convinced that neither Cathleen nor I could exist under such circumstances, with no other support than borrowed money. No, Mary, it is not in this way that the kindest heart, or the amplest means could serve us. Much as I have suffered, and still

must endure, I am not reduced to the meanness of purchasing my own gratification at another's cost. I trust I may say for myself, without presumption, that I loathe the idea of being dishonourable, or selfish, more than I dread the greatest calamity of life. But I own I had set my heart upon being the means of saving Cathleen, and perhaps this was a kind of selfishness, for which I am deservedly punished."

Allan was proceeding to justify himself, as the miserable not unfrequently do, immediately after acknowledging the justice of their sufferings, when the door of his chamber opened, and Harriet Grey appeared, with a countenance of more sedate and real satisfaction than she had worn since her return to her own family.

"Just the two people in the world I most wished to see!" she exclaimed, advancing towards her brother and Mary, who both looked in need of any consolation she might have to impart. "Aunt Hilary has been telling me," she continued, "that it was settled by our

sage seniors last night, for me to have the sum of five hundred pounds for my marriage portion. Now as I consider myself in my own proper person a sufficient blessing for any reasonable man, without this accompaniment; but especially as Mr. Maxwell has more money than he knows how to spend with discretion, I am going to thank my father for his liberality, and to tell him at the same time, that I intend to bestow the money upon those who need it more than myself. And then, you know, Allan, it will just do for you and Cathleen to begin the world with; or, if I must speak sorrowfully, for sorrow seems to be the order of the day, it will perhaps help to sweeten the last hours of that precious life, which Heaven alone has the power to prolong.”

Mary and Allan were both surprised into tears by the unwonted gravity of Harriet's words and manner; and while they poured forth their expressions of gratitude, she hastened from them, for her own eyes had caught

the infection, and it seemed to be in defiance of some secret compact with her heart, if ever she exhibited signs of deep or serious feeling.

Harriet's offer had been so freely made, and was so reasonable in itself, that Mary at last prevailed with her brother to suffer it to be laid before the higher authorities.

"It will injure no one," she said, "and if you were in Harriet's situation, and she in yours, would it not be your first impulse to do as she has done? There is sometimes a generosity in accepting, as well as in giving; so trouble yourself no more about the matter, Allan, but leave it for others to decide for you."

In spite of Harriet's fancied resolution, and her strong conviction that she was acting right, no sooner did she find herself alone with her father, than the habitual dread with which she had ever regarded any close contact with him, seemed to take away the strength from her limbs, and the power of utterance from her lips.

Unacquainted with the calm fortitude that

supported her sister Mary under every trial, Harriet had ever been accustomed to act from impulse only ; and in all her communications with her father, the impulse of fear was predominant. In vain did she now reason with herself—in vain did she appeal to her conscience for the justice of her cause—a sense of choking and bitterness was in her throat ; and when she suspended her breath for the purpose of speaking, her heart seemed to forsake its wonted place, and to beat with suffocating and violent palpitations in the region of the voice.

At last she persuaded herself it was of no use undergoing so much misery at that particular time. When her father returned in the evening would do just as well—nay, better, for he would then be more at liberty ; and therefore she permitted him to eat his breakfast in uninterrupted peace, and to depart for his business in town with his wonted silence and solemnity.

His absence afforded Harriet a delightful reprieve, and she spent the intervening hours before his return in making herself more agreeable to Mr. Maxwell than she had ever taken pains to be before : for seeing him entirely out of his element, weary, and somewhat dispirited with the uncongenial nature of his situation, she thought how many comforts he had sacrificed for her sake ; it is possible she thought also, how small was the return she was ever likely to make ; and these thoughts will sometimes produce a transient feeling of kindness and gratitude, even where affection is wholly wanting.

Never since the days of her rebellious childhood had Harriet dreaded the sound of her father's returning step more than on this evening ; and when he withdrew from the tea-table and took his seat alone in the common sitting-room, and she felt that her hour was come, she called Mary aside, not to ask her for advice, but, in plain terms, for some bodily stimulus,

without which she declared it would be impossible for her to mention the name of Allan in her father's presence.

The two sisters retired together, and while Harriet shook as if an ague fit was upon her, Mary, with some reluctance, poured out a glass of wine.

"Fear not, Mary," she exclaimed, and hastily swallowed a second, "never was your wine better bestowed, for I am about to do the first good action of my life, and I tremble as if I had just murdered my grandmother. What a pity it is that people should be compelled to fear doing what is right! Now, Mary—now I am really going. Stay one moment. Do you think my father will say any thing very bad of poor Allan? If he does, I shall never be able to bear it."

"I believe," said Mary, "he will be very severe—at least, he always has been with me, but you must regard it as little as you can; and when you reflect that he is one of

those well-intentioned people whose minds are so prejudiced that they cannot be made to see the truth, and that he knows nothing of the mischief he does by his severity, and not one-hundredth part of the pain he inflicts, you may, at least, bear what he says with patience.”

“ But what will he say ? Tell me, that I may be better prepared ? ”

“ He will say that Allan is idle, ungrateful, unprincipled ”—

“ And if I tell him it is a lie—a threefold lie, what will he say then ? ”

“ Hush, Harriet ; you must be both calm and respectful, or you will never do any thing with my father. Besides, his really good intentions deserve thus much, at least, from his children.”

“ Well, Mary, I will do my best ; but don't you hear how my teeth are chattering ? and my heart, in spite of all you and Terence say about my having none, is leaping about in my throat like a round hard ball. But now I am really gone,” and she closed the door behind her, only

opening it again, for a moment, to ask Mary whether she thought her father kept a cat-o'-nine-tails in his study ?

Stephen Grey had never been accustomed to regard his daughter Harriet with even common complacency. Her light and flippant manners had hitherto afforded sufficient proof to him of the absence of right judgment, and sound principle. But since she had been honoured with the partial favour of a substantial and practical man, her character had acquired considerable dignity in his eyes ; and when, in a serious and subdued tone, she requested to know whether he was at liberty to attend to her for a few minutes, a slight suspicion that her general frivolity might possibly conceal some real worth, mingled perhaps with the natural feelings of a parent about to consign to a stranger's hand the future protection and care of his child, made him welcome her unexpected appearance with something more like a smile than his countenance had ever before assumed towards her.

This unwonted illumination was, however, too soon exchanged for a proportionate degree of harshness and gloom, on finding that his unfortunate son Allan was to be the subject of their conversation ; and when Harriet at last, with much hesitation, and a voice scarcely intelligible from its want of power, had fully explained her desire to make over her stipulated portion for her brother's use, the contempt and indignation with which this generous proposition was rejected, by rousing the turbulent passions to which Harriet was too liable, at once subdued her fears, and gave her a faculty of utterance as voluble as it was extravagant and indiscreet.

"You speak of poor Allan," she said, "as if he were a base, unprincipled wretch, unworthy to be called your son."

"I do consider that man as base," replied her father, "who is willing to feed his own inclinations upon the property of another—I do consider that man unprincipled, who wastes in idleness and selfish indulgence the precious

hours of his youth—hours that ought to be devoted to the useful and practical concerns of life.”

“Allan is not idle,” exclaimed Harriet indignantly. “He works with his head, if not with his hands ; and if you had made yourself better acquainted with his character, you would have known that he has lately done what might put us all to shame.”

“I understand that by sighing about by moonlight, and spending whole days in a pleasure boat upon the river, he has concocted a few poems, which I suppose he has borrowed money to get into print, and which, if I mistake not greatly, nobody will read.”

“You may ridicule what he has done if you please, for it is the custom of the world to estimate every man’s endeavours by his success ; but his motives are above your contempt, at least above that of any rational being. If you knew the noble, generous design that has cost him all his labour—for in spite of what

you think, it has been labour, and that by night and day—if you knew the nature of the hopes that have supported him through every difficulty until now, you would know better (though it is not in your heart to know entirely) how to appreciate his exertions, and commiserate his disappointment.”

“And may I ask what these high sounding hopes have been, and what is the important design to which you allude? Or am I still, as a parent, to be excluded from the counsels of my son, and subjected to the taunting impertinence of every woman in my house, for never having done what they call justice to his merits?”

“I will tell you,” said Harriet, altogether reckless of consequences, “what my brother’s motives were. The hopes he entertained were to save the life of a young and amiable woman, and his design was to procure the necessary means by his own literary labours.”

Stephen Grey actually laughed aloud; but it was a grim and ghastly laugh, more like the

muscular distortions produced upon a dead body by the agency of galvanism, than the free and natural expression of a glad heart.

A pause ensued ; for Harriet grew pale, and trembled with the violence of her own emotions.

“ I now see the whole drift of this romance, so worthy of its author,” exclaimed Stephen Grey, resuming the accustomed sternness of his look and manner ; while rising from his chair, and advancing full in front of Harriet, he raised himself to the extreme height of his tall and gaunt figure.

“ I will not,” he continued, in a slow and solemn voice, “ waste words upon a subject which has neither reason nor propriety to recommend it. But I tell you now and for the last time, that I *will* see justice done to my children, and their connexions—that not one penny of mine shall go to feed the folly of that egregious fool—and that if any thing could make me more determined than I was before,

it would be the preposterous idea of his flying in the face of common decency—violating every moral and religious feeling—defying the laws of earth and heaven, by marrying that miserable pennyless girl, and thus uniting himself to disease and death.”

“It is enough!” said Harriet, rising from her seat; while a burning crimson rushed into her cheek. “You and I, father, are about to separate, perhaps for ever; but before I go I would tell you a plain truth, that you may lay it to your bosom for the benefit of others more fortunate than myself. I am on the eve of marriage with a man who possesses no more of my affections, than do the ashes that lie upon your hearth; and whatever may be the consequences of this connexion, they will be chargeable to the unnatural severity which has made your house a place of terror to your children, instead of a home of peace.”

With these words Harriet left her father’s presence; and when she had reached her sister

Mary's chamber, a long fit of hysterics, the consequence of her unaccustomed and unsuccessful exertions, terminated the scene for that miserable night.

CHAPTER VII.

ALTHOUGH Stephen Grey must have seen from the days of his children's infancy, that he was an object of fear rather than of affection at his own fireside ;—although he must have known, if he had condescended to think the subject worthy of his notice, that his presence brought a gloom along with it ; that the communion of social feeling, the laugh, and the friendly jest, were hushed when he approached ; and that whatever hopes or fears—whatever pains or pleasures agitated the young hearts around him, he was shut out from their confidence, and from their love ; it had never entered into his imagination to suspect that the fault

lay originally with himself, and that after the strong impression his severity had made upon their tender minds—after they had been repelled, and cast from him as it were in their helplessness, they could not, if they would, approach him with familiarity in their riper years. He felt as if his children withheld from him that tribute of affection which he considered as the effect of duty, rather than the natural growth of the mutual relationship of parent and child, sweetened by all the tender offices of gratitude and kindness; and therefore he looked upon them as solely responsible for the non-performance of this duty, and upon himself as a slighted parent, and an injured man.

In all family disputes, misunderstandings, or offences, he regarded his children as the aggressors; nor had it ever crossed his mind that he could with propriety have made them more happy than they really were, until the startling sentence with which his daughter Harriet left him struck a new chord of feeling,

and roused him to an alarming suspicion, that his children did not look upon him as their friend. Yet how could this be? He had clothed and fed them for so many years, he had laid down such wholesome restrictions for their good government, he had watched over them so carefully, and rebuked their erring dispositions with a justice so exactly proportioned to their deserts, it must be their blindness to their real interest—it could be nothing else, that made them spurn his authority, and reject his long continued kindness with ingratitude.

These thoughts pressed heavily upon the soul of Stephen Grey, as he sat pondering in silence and alone upon his daughter's parting words. The desire to be unkind, or the suspicion that he really enjoyed the infliction of retributive punishment, were feelings that had no place in his heart. He inquired of his conscience, and convinced himself, though not so clearly as sometimes, that he had done his

best. He had set before his children an un-deviating example of sobriety of life and conversation ; he had zealously and faithfully given them religious instruction—few had given their families more,—and yet to be reproached with having made their home a scene of terror ! He could neither account for the fact, nor reconcile it to his feelings ; and he traced out individually the characters he had had to deal with, for the purpose of establishing himself in the opinion, that he had adapted his mode of treatment to the peculiarities of their minds and tempers.

“ First,” said he, in mental soliloquy, “ there is my oldest son, the nearest in all respects to what I wish. Him I have singled out for my especial favour, that it may be seen how I can mingle kindness with authority, when real merit claims my regard. Then my son George, not brilliant, but I hope well meaning. Him I have had the consideration to place exactly according to his choice, in a situation where he

is likely to be active, economical, and useful. To my daughter Mary, who possesses some discretion, I have committed the management of my household concerns." And here he paused, for in the solitary hours of midnight there are sometimes kindly thoughts arising, even towards the reprobate; and for the first time in his life, he began to question whether he might not have been too perseveringly severe to his next unworthy son.

"Perhaps I have," said he; "but I have passed my word in this instance, and cannot with propriety retract. And then my daughter Harriet—she who has dared to reproach me with all the violence of passion. By what gentle means could I have restrained her rebellious temper, or subdued her desperate will?"

With peculiar satisfaction his thoughts now turned to his daughter Ellen; who, by the equanimity of her general deportment, and the gentleness of her manners, which often gave her the appearance of soliciting a favour when

she was in fact assuming a right, had lately worked her way to a place in his favour, far above that held by either of her sisters. She was herself less distant with her father, and less fearful in his presence than the rest of his children, because her infancy had been in some measure protected from his harshness by the almost maternal fondness and anxiety of her sister Mary. And thus, by calculating how seldom his indignation had been roused against her, he persuaded himself that she must in reality be much more deserving of his gracious countenance, than either Mary or Harriet. She had, besides, never presumed to interfere with his administration of justice ; she had pleaded for no culprit, she had in no instance thwarted the exercise of his authority, she was, in short, a dutiful and decent girl ; and but for her unfortunate predilection in favour of a poor Irishman, for which she was too young and inexperienced to be very blamable, he should have felt inclined to make her also an ex-

ample of the benefit of obtaining his good opinion.

With these reflections, Stephen Grey retired to rest, inwardly resolving, that since he had been a little too hard and too determined with Harriet on behalf of her brother, he would, the next time he was pressed on any point relating to his children's wishes, yield something more than his own judgment might warrant, especially if the happiness of his youngest daughter was concerned.

Nor was it long before this benevolent intention was put to the proof, in a way he had little anticipated; and on that particular point, from which the desire of resistance was slightly withdrawn.

On the following evening, when the party at Welbourne House were seated in full conclave, the younger ladies diligently pursuing their stitchery in silence, now and then interrupted by some animated direction from Harriet, on whose behalf they were employed; their

father with a large volume in his hand, from which he never raised his eyes; and Mrs. Hilary beguiling the tedious hours, by playing with the drowsy alderman at what Stephen Grey was pleased to call "the idle and unprofitable game of backgammon," a thundering step was heard in the hall, and Terence Malone, throwing open the door of the drawing-room as wide as if Gog or Magog were at his heels, presented himself alone, without any apology for his abrupt appearance, before the wondering party.

The glance of his eye, and the ineffable delight of his whole countenance, as he looked directly and expressively at Ellen, told even more of the real truth than his hurried and exulting words, as he drew from under his arm a well-secured and important-looking packet, tied with red tape, and sealed with a mighty seal, already torn asunder.

He made no attempt to explain himself in technical or official language. Wild and

unstudied expressions of ecstatic triumph burst involuntarily from his lips ; and throwing down the parchments upon the table, he exclaimed, “It is all settled, signed, and sealed. Examine these papers, Mr. Grey ; the decision of my fate is here. Mary, congratulate me—I am the happiest man in existence ! I only wish my poor father could have lived to see this day !”

Harriet had uttered a scream of delight on first comprehending what he meant. Ellen had blushed “celestial rosy red ;” while Mary, who had been accustomed from her childhood to look upon this event as comprehending in itself the greatest happiness she was capable of conceiving, sat mute and motionless, except that her pale lips were agitated by a convulsive tremor ; while her eyes were riveted upon the papers with a vacancy that looked too like despair.

He who thinks, in his vain philosophy, that he has penetrated the depths of his own heart,

searched out all its secret windings, and laid bare its hidden treasures, should take heed that he is not startled into new discoveries by occurrences like this.

Mary Grey had never entertained the slightest suspicion that she should in reality be less capable of participating in Terence Malone's good fortune, than she would have been before her knowledge of his attachment to her sister. She had wished for it—hoped for it—prayed for it, as she believed, with perfect sincerity of heart; but now that the anxiously anticipated event was publicly announced, and indisputable evidence of its reality laid before her, her rebel thoughts went wandering to and fro in rapid vacillation between the mighty sum of happiness this event had once so flatteringly promised to lay at her feet, and the cold, meagre satisfaction it had actually brought.

It is tame and profitless to relate—but oh! how intense to feel!—how in a single moment the mind can collect its revenue of experience

from sweet and pleasant memories,—from vain anticipations,—from hopes that died, as if by the lurid lightning, leaving blackness and ashes behind, and from the corroding evidence of present things, which eats into the soul and leaves for the instruction of the future an imperishable record of the past—concentrating all into one drop of intense and intolerable bitterness, and filling that single point of time with the accumulated agony of years.

It was in such a moment that Mary Grey, sensitive beyond her own belief—impassioned, though she knew it not, nor suffered it to be known by others—devoted, without ever having voluntarily yielded to the impulse of her own heart, forgot for a brief interval of mental delirium, her pride, her delicacy, her self-possession, and the native dignity of her elevated character.

Happily she was unnoticed, for in her own person she formed no part of the joyful anticipations of those around her. The next moment she was restored to herself, and to such bitter

self-upbraidings for her transient dereliction from the propriety of feeling, the disinterestedness, and the mental purity which it seemed to be an important part of her nature to maintain, that she felt as if she must have fallen low indeed in the estimation of others, as well as of herself.

It is the part of all sensitive minds to identify with their own, the opinions of those they esteem ; and whenever they commit the slightest breach of the rule of strict propriety, to chastise themselves with an imaginary censure, which it is possible their friends and companions never exercise towards them.

Mrs. Hilary had beckoned Harriet out of the room soon after the appearance of Terence with the eventful packet ; for her busy brain had immediately conceived a felicitous project, upon which she wished to consult with her niece. Stephen Grey, who disliked nothing more than the mingling of many voices on an important occasion, on retiring with the papers

in his hand to a more private apartment, had done Mr. Maxwell the honour of inviting him to follow, in order that they might, without interruption, bestow the whole of their sage consideration upon this serious business. It was but natural that Terence and Ellen should wish to share their happiness together, while autumn's pensive twilight invited them to the garden, or the river side, where they might converse unheard upon the pleasures of the present, and the hopes of the future.

Mary remained alone and unobserved; for all were too much occupied to think of her—too happy to require her sympathy; and while she leaned, in a long, long reverie, with her head upon her hands, she had the mournful satisfaction of feeling, that in seasons of danger, difficulty, or sorrow, even she, the meanest and most desolate of human beings, might have her use.

“Yet why am I desolate?” said she; “why am I sad? Is there but one being in the world

whose love is worth my care? Is there but one blessing under Heaven, for which I can be grateful? Help me, thou gracious Being, who spurnest not the supplications of thy poor degraded children—help me to shake off this weakness, and to purify myself from this pollution—help me, in this my hour of need, to devote myself more faithfully to thee—nay, to be wholly thine!”

Scarcely had this prayer been wrung from Mary's heart, when she heard an approaching step. It was a step she knew too well; and blushing deeply at the thought of what had been the subject of her meditations, she hastily drew towards her a paper which remained upon the table, and fixed her eyes upon it, without observing that it was but the cover of the lawyer's packet, and that nothing but the direction was there to occupy her attention.

Terence, whose warm heart was overflowing with its own impetuous feelings, happy to find the object of his search alone, sprang

towards her, and would have clasped her in his arms with the brotherly affection of their former years; but Mary shrunk away, and then for the first time he saw, that her countenance was not so bright and joyous as he thought he had a right to expect it would be, on such an occasion.

“What ails you, Mary?” he asked reproachfully. “You are not delighted with my good fortune.”

“Oh yes, I am, Terence,” she answered with a faltering voice, “but you know I never had a pleasant way of expressing what I felt, and therefore I am often silent when I feel the most.”

“I know no such thing, Mary. I know that you have ever been the best and the dearest of friends; and that whether I was in joy or sorrow, you always echoed the feelings of my soul in language the most eloquent to me. Why, then, are you silent now, when I feel so happy, that I seem to have a right to call upon the most

inanimate things in nature—upon the trees and the flowers, and upon yon silent moon, shining through the casement, to rejoice with me? Why are you silent, Mary? Speak to me but one kind word, for even in this blessed moment I cannot afford to lose your sympathy—your love.”

As Terence said this, he once more drew his arm around her neck, and then both were silent, for Mary’s heart was also full, though not with unmingled happiness. When she looked up, the clear, bright, beaming eyes of the friend she loved best in the world—eyes lighted up with an expression of perfect and intense enjoyment, were fixed upon her face, and so near, too, that the transient blush which marked even her slightest emotions, rose to her cheek, and made her, for one moment, the most beautiful of women.

It was a dangerous position, and gently withdrawing herself from the pressure of Terence’s arm, Mary endeavoured to smile away her em-

barrassment by asking why he was looking at her so earnestly.

“ I am thinking,” he replied, “ what an excellent wife you would make, if you could but learn to love.”

“ It is an art which some people would do well not to study ; and of these I am sure you will agree with me that I am one.”

“ Why so ?”

“ The reason is quite obvious,” said Mary, with a forced laugh.

“ I suppose you mean because no knight-errant has sworn to break a lance in the field of glory for the favour of those bright eyes. But Mary, if I had thought you capable of loving as I should like to be loved, I should myself, ere this, have broke—not my lance, but my heart in your service.”

“ Hush, Terence ! you are talking nonsense now, this unexpected good fortune has turned your head ; it is time to think of more serious things—of Cathleen and poor Allan.”

“ Ah, you remind me of what I came on purpose to say. Ellen is waiting for me at the Abbey, and we want you to come and help us to communicate these tidings to Cathleen: for, much as we all rejoice, and as she will rejoice with us, it is a hard task to tell her of the happiness in which she, poor girl, can now have little part.”

Mary felt both the difficulty and the delicacy of the duty imposed upon her, but she hesitated not for one moment; and once more leaning on the arm of Terence—once more looking up with him to the bright moon, who had so often shed her silver radiance upon their happiest hours, she traced the well-known and familiar path with a step that owed much of its lightness to the additional proof his idle, random words had just afforded, of his total ignorance of the secret of her soul—a secret which she determined should no longer prey upon her peace.

We are apt to imagine, that if one particular circumstance or consideration were removed, we

should then be able to perform our duty ; as if it were by chance, and not by the ordination of divine wisdom, that our duties were not rendered more pleasing ; and Mary Grey believed, in the present instance, that but for one thought, it would have been easy for her to anticipate, with heartfelt pleasure, the union of Terence and her sister :—but this thought was present with her, whenever she reflected upon his sanguine temper, his capability of happiness, his high estimate of the felicity of married life ; and even when she looked towards the Abbey, it seemed to cast an ideal gloom over their domestic hearth, and to darken all her anticipations of their future bliss.

Ellen Grey was not the warm-hearted, social, disinterested companion whom Terence had always pictured as the wife of his bosom. Even Mary's eyes, so long blinded to her deficiencies, could now perceive that she was not ; for it is possible that the partial veil had been, in some measure, lifted from her character, since she had

appeared to her sister in the light of Terence's future wife. This difference in Mary's vision, however, was but slight, yet it served to discover the melancholy fact, that they were not suited to each other—that Ellen's appearance had imparted to her a charm, which those who gaze on youthful beauty are apt to associate with the mind, as well as the person—and that her ardent and impassioned lover, a voluntary slave to his own blind attachment, was believing himself to be the happiest man upon the face of the earth, simply because the lady of his love was the fairest, and, in his eyes, the most free from faults.

Nor would it have been easy, even for those whose judgment was unbiassed, to have laid any positive or decided fault to Ellen's charge. There were many defects in her character, but beauty and gentle manners, in the general estimate of woman, go far towards supplying their want of energy, and even their want of heart.

It is as a wife, that these defects appear, and grow upon the disappointed husband, like the

frightful figures exhibited by a magic lantern, increasing in hideousness, as they increase in magnitude and distinctness. It is when the doting lover begins to suspect that the silent calm he had hitherto mistaken for maiden shyness, is, in reality, the silence of the soul,—the calm of imperturbable stagnation; when he discovers that he has devoted his first and his best affections to a beautiful, but marble statue; when he returns to his home, which ought to be “an ever sunny place,” and finds nothing but the yawning vacancy of a cold and cheerless void,—when he pours his fresh warm feelings, that burst in unstudied language from his burning lips, upon the stony surface of an insensible heart,—and that heart, a woman’s! It is then that he shrinks back repelled and blasted, as if the blooming charms he once adored, were exchanged for deformity and horror.

Oh! it is by the secret fountain of never-changing love—the well of inexhaustible re-

freshment in the desert—the rose that blooms for ever beneath the sunshine of one beloved eye—the voice that rises with a continued strain of melody above all the discord of the world—the bird of beauty, whose faithful wing is never folded, save in its sheltered nest—the pure unsullied stream, offering sweetness and balm to every bosom which it meets, but reserving the full tide of its gladness for one:—it is by such mystical symbols as these, that we would describe the natural, the distinctive, the holy charm of woman; not by her perfect form, her ruby lip, her sparkling eyes, or her silken tresses, whether they fell in raven masses over a marble brow, or glitter in the sunbeams like threads of waving gold.

Mary knew, perhaps, better than Terence did himself, precisely what was necessary for his happiness. She knew how much he needed the consistent energy of a decided character to regulate his own, how deeply he could feel the value of disinterested affection, and how his

generous spirit would writhe under the infliction of unkindness from one whom it would be the highest ambition of his life to shield from every sorrow and from every blight. She knew all this, and her heart yearned over the friend of her youth, as over one who is slumbering in the sunshine by the very brink of a deep and perilous gulf; for it was not merely the destruction of his domestic comfort that she feared, but the moral ruin a disappointment of this nature is but too likely to produce. She knew all this, but she knew also that it was no part of her duty to warn him of the future; neither was there the slightest probability that such warning would ever have been availing; for he would have looked in Ellen's face, and convinced himself, beyond a doubt, that it must be the index of a faultless mind.

On arriving at the Abbey, Terence and Mary found Cathleen reclining languidly upon a couch, with Allan at her feet, and Ellen waiting impatiently for their arrival—all around

them, peaceful and calm as the surface of a waveless sea, which the distant gathering tempest yet delays to ruffle.

It fell of course to Mary's lot to make the important communication, yet even her fortitude began to fail her, when she found it had awakened hopes which none but the blindly enthusiastic would, under such circumstances, have cherished.

Before she had done speaking, a crimson glow spread itself over Allan's face, even to his very brow, lighting up his eyes with a wild expression of intense delight; while Cathleen laying her hand upon Mary's arm, bade her repeat the facts again; and then, when she had fully comprehended all, she sprung from the couch with an energy almost superhuman, and clasping both her hands, while her fine eyes were raised to Heaven, she exclaimed, "Thank God! we shall all be happy yet!"

Terence and Mary looked anxiously at each other. What could they do? As if their

thoughts had flowed in unison, they both concluded it would be the best wisdom to let this extraordinary excitement exhaust itself; and when the poor deluded dreamers, who were so little calculated for the realities of life, should afterwards shape out their own thoughts into questions of practical import, it would be time enough to damp by degrees the flame of hope thus unexpectedly kindled.

Allan was the first to see the truth. "It will be of no avail," said he, after a long pause, during which the expression of his countenance had been gradually darkening to the deepest gloom. "It will be of no avail to us. Money, I suppose, Terence, will be no more at your command than ever, and autumn you see is stealing on."

Cathleen was silent. She looked composed, and they ventured to proceed; Terence explaining with great delicacy and consideration what was the real state of the case, and how impossible it would be for him to derive any imme-

diate advantage from his good fortune. He still directed his eyes almost every moment kindly and affectionately to Cathleen, who sat as if her own were glazed and sightless, while her countenance betrayed no evidence that she either heard, or was sensible of the nature of their conversation.

At last her handkerchief was raised. They were silent; and her low and struggling sobs were all they heard.

“Cathleen—dear Cathleen!” said Mary, rising; but Allan was already supporting her head upon his arm, and whispering to her in those low soothing tones which two alone should hear.

A violent fit of coughing succeeded to this hysterical affection—the rupture of a blood vessel followed; and then the last fond lingering hope departed from the soul of Allan, who felt at that moment as if he would have died a thousand deaths to save her.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALTHOUGH the progress of Cathleen's disorder was considerably accelerated by the excitement of the past evening, she rallied again; and in the course of a few days, made once more a welcome addition to the social circle.

It was strange to observe in one so feeble and so sensitive, that extreme tenacity of life, which enabled her to resist the evidence of her real situation, and studiously to conceal from others the rapidly increasing symptoms of her decline. It seemed as if she *would not* die,—as if life had too much of blissful promise to be resigned. Yet what was the substance of this

promise to her? Need it be asked of one who loved and was beloved like Cathleen?

Rocked in the cradle of suffering and anxiety, the attachment subsisting between her and Allan had assumed a deeper and holier character than that which, under happier circumstances, forms the bond of union between more ordinary minds. They had stood as it were upon the brink of the grave; and while they conversed on sublunary things, and laid the "flattering unction" to their souls, that they should live to reap the earthly harvest of their love, there had been seasons when the solemnity of death was around them, and when they had looked into eternity together. And this wide, distant prospect, opening out beyond the circle of the lover's hopes,—this breathing of the still, cold atmosphere of the tomb amongst the bowers of human bliss,—this shadowing of the heart that would bask for ever in its present happiness, by the wing of the angel of destruction,—it is this, far more

than the confidence of every wish fulfilled, that lifts the devoted soul above all selfish or unworthy considerations, that sanctifies the secret union of congenial minds; and that purifies the love for which human life has no repose, and earth no lasting home.

Ever since the scene of Cathleen's last alarming attack, the subject of that evening's conversation had been studiously avoided in her presence. Even Allan changed the theme, whenever she would have questioned him upon it; though it was difficult with one so perfectly open and confiding as Cathleen, to maintain a strict reserve on any topic interesting to her thoughts. For though no one could be less morbid, or less addicted to complain, it seemed to be a part of her nature to dive to the bottom of all troubled waters, and of every bitter cup to drink the dregs. Had she been less pitied, or less fondly cherished, she would have learned the inexpediency of doing this; but Cathleen had never known the want of sym-

pathy, and therefore she could afford to analyse, examine, and expatiate upon the darkest features of her experience. She would have dwelt for hours, had Allan permitted her, upon the peculiar nature of her circumstances; and while she never seriously admitted the fact that her mortal malady was gaining ground, she would speak of Allan's deserted state if he should be left alone, of the grave, of a future life, and of all things pertaining to death, with a minuteness that sometimes made him shudder.

The world knew little of the extent and the power of Cathleen's imagination; but there was one friend admitted into the sanctuary of her thoughts, who never wearied of the rapidly succeeding pictures her fancy conjured up, and to which her feverish excitement imparted a vividness of colouring, a distinctness, and a life, that made them almost real.

Faithful as the sun was Allan each morning by the side of Cathleen, supporting her feeble steps when she descended from her chamber,

smoothing her weary couch, and administering all the tender offices of affection ; and welcome as the dawning light of that luminary to the bewildered traveller, was the cheerful smile that concealed the anguish of his bosom, and the gentle voice that ever told of hope.

While the poor invalid, though evidently much enfeebled, was, unexpectedly to her friends, regaining something of her former position amongst them, active and efficient agents were at work, preparing Welbourne House for a season of twofold felicity.

We have said that Stephen Grey felt some compunctious visitings on the evening of his interview with his daughter Harriet. His cogitations that night had robbed him of at least two hours of his wonted rest ; and when he tried to close his eyes, after the important event which had raised Terence Malone to a high place in his regard, he felt as if sleep had fled for ever from his pillow. He saw visions of things so foreign to his nature,—visions that, if realized, would break in so alarmingly upon

his usual mode of acting, that he rose and paced about the room, and threw open the window, and looked out upon the cold moon, whose light shed a sheet of silvery whiteness over the lawn, the Abbey, and the wide fields, all which he now beheld with a protecting and paternal eye.

Nor was this the only night he spent in a manner so perturbed, so ominous of future change. The illness of Cathleen for a short time suspended the unwonted operations of his mind, but they were resumed again on hearing of her partial recovery ; and, for the first time in his life, Stephen Grey conceived a project designed solely for the production of happiness, and admirably calculated for accomplishing the desired end.

“ They tell me,” said he, when alone in his chamber, “ that I have been too strict, or too harsh with my son Allan ; but I will show them that I can be generous and complying when I think that merit deserves to be rewarded.”

Then, startled at the magnitude of his own condescension, he paused, and looked at the subject once again in all its bearings. At least he looked at the Abbey, and calculated the produce of the Abbey lands, the rent of the farm adjoining, the value of the Irish bog, and the number of the tenements in the liberties of Dublin; and the result was, that as Terence Malone would soon be a man of property and influence, and as his daughter Ellen was, as far as women generally are, discreet in her conduct, and amiable in her temper, he would himself propose that their union should take place without delay; and if the portion he allowed his daughters on their marriage should be insufficient to render their union a prudent one, under present circumstances, why, he did not know but he might be able to advance another hundred, upon such security as Terence Malone would now be able to give.

The novel effect of this resolution upon the mind of Stephen Grey, seemed, for a few hours,

to have wholly changed his nature, rendering him so impatient, restless, and unmanageable to himself, that he sent for Terence as soon as his meagre breakfast was concluded, and, enclosed within the solemn precincts of his own private study, (a sanctuary into which none of the junior members of his family were ever admitted, except on the most important occasions,) he communicated then and there the benevolent and gracious purpose which lay with such uneasy weight upon his heart.

It was well for Terence that he did not actually bound over the table where the credentials of his pecuniary merit were still spread forth—it was well that he did not interrupt the stream of bounty thus unexpectedly poured upon him, by any violent or unguarded explosion of delight ; for he felt, at that moment, like a man who, having long looked with anxious eye into some region of forbidden happiness, finds the barrier all at once removed which had hindered his full and free possession.

That he committed no extravagant absurdity, was owing to the strength of early association having made a private interview with Stephen Grey, particularly in his own study, the most awful and overwhelming event, that could well occur to those in any way connected with his domestic rule. Such, in fact, was the imposing effect of all immediate things, that Terence Malone was able to sit very still until the gracious sentence was delivered; to look very demure throughout the whole of the succeeding lecture on economy, temperance, and sobriety; and, rising deliberately from his chair, to thank his future father in grave and measured terms, without clapping him on the back, as he confessed afterwards to Harriet he felt very much inclined to do.

His propriety of demeanour, however, lasted no longer than until the door of the study was closed behind him, when, bounding through the hall, he rushed first into the parlour, then up stairs, and then into the garden, telling every

one he met what a happy man the last hour had made him.

“ Delightful ! charming ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Hilary, rubbing her hands ; “ but mark me, Mr. Malone, I was the first person to think of this ; it is the very scheme I proposed to Harriet a week ago, when the stupid girl would not let me lay it before her father. How absurd,” she continued to herself, bustling away to find Mr. Maxwell, “ how perfectly ridiculous are all these fears. I see nothing in Stephen Grey to be afraid of, more than in other men ; if the girls would but take my advice and follow my example, they might manage their father like a child.

“ And now, Mr. Maxwell,” for by this time she had found the object of her search, “ what say you to two weddings in one day ? ”

Mr. Maxwell knew very well that he was extremely anxious for one ; but as for the other, the parties were quite at liberty to please themselves. It was no concern of his, only he ad-

ded, and then he thought aloud, if it was likely to occasion any delay, he was of the opinion that one event of this kind was as much as could be comfortably got through with, in a quiet family like Mr. Grey's, where he was sorry to see so few servants, that he was really afraid of giving trouble every time he moved.

"My dear sir," replied Mrs. Hilary, in a compassionating tone, "we cannot expect to find in the country all the conveniences we enjoy at home; but I am sure you could not object to wait another week, for the sake of seeing two devoted lovers made happy."

"I like, as well as any man does, to see people happy, but I like, also, to be happy myself. I have written to my servants to make every thing ready for me by Thursday night, at the very latest. Besides, you know, my dear madam," and here his countenance assumed an air of uncommon gravity, "the county election is at hand; Sir Henry Belgrave begins to canvass on Monday, the 11th, and we must not be behind hand

for a wedding. It cannot be, Mrs. Hilary ; you will oblige me by letting the matter rest where it is, for there would be dresses, furniture, and a thousand things to prepare, for which even a fortnight would afford too little time."

" Pooh, nonsense !" exclaimed Mrs. Hilary, for a moment forgetting the dignity of the alderman ; " we will all set to work, and I fancy such dresses and furniture as their means are likely to provide, might be got ready by Thursday, or Friday at the latest. It is not from you, Mr. Maxwell, but from another quarter, that I should have expected these objections : but I will try my luck there too, for nothing could be so charming as two weddings in a day. Only think, what a long paragraph it will make in the newspapers ;" and congratulating herself upon having first suggested the idea, she was hurrying away to the door of her brother's study, upon which she threatened a somewhat obstinate attack, had not the object of her search already entered the hall.

If the parties most interested had been witness to what passed at this moment, they would have looked upon their cause as inevitably lost—upon their hopes as utterly destroyed; for the bustling and delighted little woman seized both the hands of Stephen Grey, and looking with playful smiles into his face, exclaimed, “My dearest brother, you have made us all the happiest people upon earth.”

“Pray what has happened to *you*, Mrs. Hilary?”

“Why, nothing to me in particular; but we are going to have two weddings in a day, and we only want a little more money to fit Ellen out like her sister; for time presses, and economy is out of the question.”

The first indignant movement of Stephen Grey had been to secure the possession of his own hands; and now raising himself to his full height, he prepared to assert the personal importance, which in the presence of Mrs. Hilary was perpetually threatened.

“If my daughter Ellen,” said he, “wishes for half, or a hundredth part of the gewgaws, and the mummeries, that simpleton of yours has learned to value, she may wait for her bridal portion till my death ; for most assuredly, while I hold the responsibility of her father, or retain the means upon which she is dependent, she shall be indulged with none of these things. I am moreover convinced that my daughter Ellen would desire to appear before the world, not as a puppet, but as a rational woman.”

“But the day, dearest brother?” continued the pertinacious little woman. “You can have no objection to the two couples being made happy on the same day?”

“Do as you please,” murmured Stephen Grey, turning round, and reaching down his hat ; “do as you please, only cease to trouble me. I have other things to occupy my mind, besides the place and time when boys and girls shall be made happy, as you call it.”

Mrs. Hilary thought that Mr. Maxwell, at

least, could hardly with propriety be called a boy ; but for once she thought in silence, and passing on with the most lively satisfaction to the different members of the family, communicated the happy issue of her interview with Stephen Grey. For happy it was to her, to be permitted on any terms to make arrangements for the two weddings, which now so entirely occupied her busy brain.

Ellen Grey was by no means so much gratified by the intelligence as her aunt had expected.

“ It was impossible,” she said, “ to be ready at the time proposed. It would be absurd to see two sisters, figuring as brides, so differently dressed as she and Harriet must be ;” nor was it until Terence had exerted all his eloquence in endeavouring to reconcile her to the hastily projected scheme, that she yielded a reluctant consent, her look and manner all the while so cold and haughty, that her lover, blinded as he was by the most bewildering of all passions, could not help suspecting, for one moment, that some-

thing more than maiden shyness lurked behind her modest charms.

As the day of twofold felicity approached, the behaviour of Harriet Grey became more capricious than ever. Alternately high and low, boisterous and melancholy, she seemed a total stranger to that quiet medium which belongs to a mind at rest, and satisfied with itself. Always subject to hysterical affections, she now made frequent and pitiful appeals to Mary, for the stimulants which, though sometimes almost necessary, her sister was always afraid to give.

“Dear Harriet,” said Mary one day, “how happy you would make me if you would try to do without these things. Suppose yourself in a house where no stimulants are to be had, and exert yourself as you would do then.”

“Mary,” replied Harriet, “you know I have no imagination—I cannot cheat myself into this belief.”

“But does it never strike you, Harriet, that these are scarcely justifiable or lawful means

for assisting us to bear the crosses and the difficulties of life ?”

“Nay, do not preach to me now, Mary; it might be wrong for you, who are a regularly established saint, but nothing of this kind can make me worse than I am. Besides, you don’t know exactly how much I have to bear, or I am sure you would be more merciful;” and, as if to shake off her own distressing thoughts, she rose from her seat, and opening a casket, displayed a rich and costly set of jewels, the gift of her wealthy lover.

“See,” she exclaimed, “what money can accomplish! When my heart is aching, I shall surround it with this girdle, and fasten it with this clasp, and all will be well.”

“Harriet, you distress me; do tell me seriously, for once, whether you wish to be the wife of Mr. Maxwell or not; for depend upon it, if you do not, I will yet devise means to break the engagement for you, at any risk or at any cost.”

“ How, Mary, you a saint of the first water, and talk of breaking an engagement ?”

“ I am no saint, Heaven knows ; yet, were I in your place, I could not suffer this tie to be dissolved without taking shame, and remorse, and sorrow to myself ; but I would first ask myself, whether I should not necessarily incur more shame, more remorse, and more sorrow, by marrying the man I could not love, and entering into the most solemn union, with a heart incapable of fulfilling its peculiar and holy duties.”

“ But Mr. Maxwell never talks about hearts, or duties, or any of these fine things. He wants nothing in a wife but a young and lively woman, to entertain his numerous guests, and I think you must allow that I am admirably fitted for the purpose.”

“ Harriet, you are always trifling ; in pity to yourself and me, be serious with me now.”

“ Indeed I am not trifling, Mary ; I am acting upon a great resolution—so great, that it almost

breaks my heart ;” and she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

“ Harriet,” said Mary, shocked and pained beyond measure, “ I will speak to my father this very night ; you shall not marry Mr. Maxwell.”

“ Not for worlds would I suffer you to do so. What I have said to you in sad earnest, must be secret as the grave. To-morrow you will see me an altered being. This is one of my weak moments, and I must speak out.”

“ And since you have spoken, I must act upon what you say.”

“ Not for worlds ! I tell you ;” and Harriet seized her sister’s arm. “ You may, if you please, go both to my father and to Mr. Maxwell, and tell them all I have said, for there is no knowing what you duty-doing people will not undertake ; but if you do, I will follow with a smiling face, and contradict your words. My resolution on this subject has long been fixed. I am not wavering when

I weep. Be satisfied then, dear Mary ; I am but choosing one out of many evils, and nothing you can say or do is powerful enough to effect the slightest change in my determination. Besides, Mary, though I sometimes feel these horrid qualms, I am upon the whole extremely happy—so happy, I assure you, that I shall behave with the most becoming decorum on this great occasion—I only wish it was not quite so near.

“ And now I am very weary ;” and she yawned with all her might. “ Look at your watch, Mary. I declare it is past twelve ! You, too, must want rest. Good night.” She then opened the door for her sister, who knew not whether to go or stay, or what to make of this strange waywardness, so foreign to her own nature.

As the important day drew near, the arrival of the different members of the select party invited for the occasion, denoted the approach of an extraordinary event, and converted Welbourne House into a scene of hospitality and

social intercourse amongst those who felt the full value of that familiar fellowship, which marriage is accused (we will not say how justly) of destroying.

First, and by no means of the least consequence in the number of expected guests, was James Grey, now a substantial lawyer in the full and successful practice of his profession.

It was not to waste his time in idle festivities that this sage person had torn himself away from a business, which he declared to be dependent upon his constant oversight; but to draw up the marriage settlements, to examine into the general state of his father's affairs, to superintend, to inspect, and to adjust, wherever his influence could be exerted with effect. And well pleased was Stephen Grey to see the character of his oldest son, the son of his heart, ripened into that of an able, practical, and useful man.

Ostentatiously solemn and demure, economical by nature, and *professedly* every thing

that he thought likely to win the confidence of the wealthy and the powerful, James Grey seemed to walk the earth like one who treads a ladder, ascending at each step; and casting behind him every natural feeling, passion, or propensity, that might interfere with the attainment of his wishes, he already bid fair for being himself both a wealthy and a powerful man.

In striking contrast with his brother, appeared the uncouth, undisciplined form of George Grey, whose countenance had gained little by the lapse of time, except a stronger and more intelligible expression of hunger and thirst, at a stated period before every meal, or before those potent libations with which he indulged himself oftener than the day.

Kind and cordial as Mary was in all her feelings towards her own family, the presence of these two brothers afforded little pleasure, even to her; for James was too entirely a man of business to be at all companionable to a

woman ; and George was too gross, too indolent, and too much addicted to mere animal enjoyment, to be companionable to anything except a plum-pudding, a pipe, or a punch-bowl.

But there was one guest whose presence seemed to bring pleasure enough along with it, to counterbalance at least one half of Mary's cares. It was Catherine Lee, who had promised to be with her on this important occasion, and who entered like a sister into all the feelings, not only of her friend, but of Allan, Harriet, and Ellen.

Perhaps we should hardly say *all* the feelings ; for in seasons of festivity, when every countenance is decked with smiles, and every circumstance is wearing a propitious aspect ; when the tide of outward satisfaction glides smoothly on, and neither wave nor ripple can be seen upon the surface ; in seasons such as these, there is often an under-current—an adverse stream of turbid bitterness, troubling the repose even of those who smile the most.

With this current, Mary Grey was inwardly contending. For besides the secret visitation of forbidden thoughts, she was grieved to her very soul on behalf of her sister Harriet—of Allan, and poor Cathleen, to whom it was impossible to extend the cup of happiness, so liberally prepared for others. Not that Harriet had given her any recent cause of uneasiness, for since the arrival of Catherine Lee, she had assumed, according to her promise, a different character. Though she still talked wildly, and elicited much amusement, both for herself and others, from the characteristic habits of those around her, she ceased to make Mr. Maxwell the subject of her raillery—indeed, she ceased to mention him altogether; and when Mrs. Hilary joked about the loving couples, in that peculiar language, which goes as far as anything can go, towards making the parties concerned most hateful to each other, Harriet either talked her down in a voice still louder than her own, or broke the thread of her

eloquence by some sudden exclamation, calculated to turn the attention of the audience another way.

“After all,” thought Mary, as she looked with astonishment on Harriet’s cheerful face, while she laughed and talked with Terence, “she is no subject for my pity. I will forget all the wretched things she has said, perhaps to make a jest of my fears; for certain I am, that no woman could look as she does, on the eve of a marriage that she loathed.”

And in some measure Mary was right, for Harriet wanted that fine sensibility which acknowledges no medium between the happiness and the misery of married life; she wanted the high-toned feeling that would have made her spurn a connexion recommended only by its pecuniary or personal advantages; and therefore she determined to act her part with every appearance of satisfaction, believing, as many a foolish girl has done besides, that when once married, her trials would be over.

It was on the eve of the day, anticipated with feelings as different as the constitutions and tempers of those most intimately concerned in its pleasures and its duties, that Mary was startled by a gentle tap at the door of her chamber, where she had retired for one moment of silence and repose, after a day of unremitting exertion. It was her brother Allan who sought to occupy this moment, and who broke in reluctantly upon its repose.

“Allan!” she exclaimed, shocked to behold his pale and haggard countenance, “how ill you look! how deplorably—”

“Miserable, I suppose you mean, Mary. It is only by contrast. You see so many happy faces now, that mine makes but a poor figure among them.” And he looked in her face with such a pitiful and hopeless smile, that Mary threw her arms around his neck, and leaned her head upon his shoulder to hide the tears she could no longer suppress.

He returned her embrace in silence, and their tears fell together. Allan was the first to speak.

“Have you time, Mary,” said he, “to leave this scene of festivity for a few minutes, and walk with me to the river-side, where we may converse without fear of interruption?”

“There is nothing I should like better,” replied his sister; and they stole, unnoticed, through a private door into the garden, and soon found themselves away from every sound, except the rush of the river, now swollen with the rains of autumn.

“How soon is the aspect of nature changed!” exclaimed Allan, as they paused on the banks of the stream.

“And the heart of man!” said Mary; “either by the violence of its own passions, bursting open the flood-gates of tumult and destruction; or by the benignant influence of heavenly love, stealing in, like these moonbeams upon the landscape, and lighting up with fresh beauty

all that is most lovely and most admirable in its nature."

"You are right," observed Allan, after they had stood for another moment listening to the roar of the waters. "It was but two nights ago, that, standing on this very spot, I looked around me, and beheld nothing but serenity and repose.—I listened, and universal stillness reigned in heaven and earth. My soul was then all tumult, and I contemplated with repining and envy, the unruffled surface of the tide, gliding without a ripple or a murmur at my feet. But now, Mary," and he drew his sister's arm within his own, "my rebellious feelings are subdued, and the river rushes on, as if impelled by the desperation that once was mine."

Soothed by this long wished-for assurance, Mary could only answer by a silent pressure of her brother's hand, as she drew closer to his side, and leaned with more than necessary weight upon his arm.

“ Mary,” he continued, “ you will think me strange, capricious, and perhaps unfeeling, when I tell that I am about to absent myself entirely from my father’s house, during this season of gaiety.”

“ No, Allan, that will never do. You must not remain at the Abbey all to-morrow. Remarks will be made, which I shall find it difficult to bear, and which it is quite possible, may touch the delicacy of one whom we ought to screen even from the breath of censure.”

“ You mistake me, Mary. I have seen all this. It is not within the Abbey walls that I am going to hide myself. I have already taken leave of Cathleen; and now must beg of you to make the best excuses for me that you can, especially to Harriet and Ellen. Tell them, that if I could in any way have graced their nuptials, I would not have been absent; and tell them also, that though I have withdrawn my gloomy countenance from this felicitous

occasion, they will find me a better and a truer friend, should days of darkness ever come.”

“Harriet and Ellen will readily excuse you, because they know, in part, what you must feel and suffer; but, Allan, how am I to make your conduct appear blameless to my father?”

“Blameless it never was, and never will be in his sight. We both know perfectly well, that he will put the worst possible construction upon what I am about to do; nor would I ask you to bear this burden for me, did I not hope it would be the last. I shall only be away for a few days. I will not say how few, lest poor Cathleen should be calculating too minutely upon the time of my return; and then it is my fixed determination to appeal to my father for a candid explanation of his wishes concerning my future conduct, and if they be reasonable, to conform myself to them—to devote what talents I possess to his service—to work for him in his office, in his fields, or in any way

that may remunerate him for my maintenance, and redeem my character before him."

"May Heaven strengthen you in this determination! For He who searches every heart, alone can tell how much it costs you."

"It would indeed have cost me much, a month—a week ago. But during the last few days, I have held deep conflicts with myself—I have remembered your words, and applied them to my own situation in a way that seemed impossible to me when they were spoken; and the result is this—a clear conviction of the duty of submission to the Father and Creator of the world, and a full confidence that he who requires this submission, portions out the sufferings of his weak, blind creatures, both in wisdom and in mercy."

"Thank God!" was all that Mary could answer, for her heart was too full for words.

"You must not," he continued, "anticipate too much, but spare your thanks until you see

me act upon this conviction as my only support ; and trust in this confidence as my only consolation. It is now the time to lament with me, over the weakness that drives me hence."

"And must you really go, Allan?"

"I must ; for I am a very child in combating present things. I would not mar the happiness of any earthly creature—still less of those I love. But then I would not stand by, a miserable and discontented spectator of happiness—a blot where I ought to have been an ornament—a blighted bough where I might have been a pillar of strength."

"These, Allan, are but the melancholy forebodings of a too imaginative mind."

"No, Mary. I speak in metaphors, but the truth is the same. In my father's sight I am a hateful and distressing object ; and to which of you am I a consolation or support?"

"Oh ! to me, dear Allan—to me !"

"Hush, Mary ; you should speak with your

conscience on your lips. I know you would speak kindly even then. But you would tell how many bitter tears I had cost you—how many anxious thoughts—how many sleepless hours. This is the harvest of your love for me.”

“No ; the harvest is yet to come in its full measure of blessing and abundance, when I see you enjoying that peace of mind which is the reward of an humble and entire submission to the will of God.”

“Then pray for me, Mary. Pray for me with all your heart ; but do not endeavour to detain me.”

“I will do both ; for I cannot see what reasons should operate against your staying amongst us, consistently with the better feelings you have just expressed.”

“Consistency, Mary, has little to do with a state of mind like mine ; and what you cannot see, I feel acutely. In short, I dare not trust myself. I should be coveting some of the

unnecessary trappings of that enjoyment which is not permitted to me. I should be mentally converting the bridal robe into a winding-sheet; or worse than all, I might impiously question why Heaven had not wrung out from the fulness of the felicity of others, a single drop of happiness for me."

"It is enough, my brother. Go, since you must, and God be with you. But tell me when to look for your return, and where my thoughts may find you till that time?"

"I can tell you neither, exactly. It is not my intention to go far, and depend upon it, I shall return as soon as the flash of this brilliant occasion is over—return, if possible, an altered man, determined, since I am not permitted to be independent as I wished, to be useful in some humble way—to be to you, my beloved sister, a greater comfort than I have been—to watch that fading star until its beams are withdrawn for ever from my world—and then!—"

Allan clenched his sister's arm with a grasp

so unnatural and convulsive, that she saw at once the necessity of yielding to any proposition likely to promote his peace of mind ; and she simply answered in a kind and soothing voice, “ When that one star has turned away its radiance to illuminate a brighter sphere, there will be other luminaries in the glorious heavens left for us.”

“ But not for me. No, Mary, do not preach a philosophy which, in my situation, you would find unavailable. There may be, and I know there is, much solid satisfaction in the lonely path of quiet duty ; but when the flower of my life—the gem of my bosom—the star of my night is no more, that path will be shrouded in darkness and the shadow of death to me. Farewell! The lights in the distance are disappearing. It is time to part. Farewell, my own dear sister. You will think of me sometimes. Yes, even amidst all your other sources of interest and occupation, I know you will think of me. When you do, remember, for

your consolation, that there are some good resolutions lurking in this blighted bosom—remember this, dear Mary, and pray to our heavenly Father that he may compassionate his weak and erring child.”

The farewell that Mary would have uttered, died upon her lips ; and, returning her brother's fond embrace in silence and tears, she tore herself away, and left the solitary wanderer to pursue in silence his mysterious path.

About a hundred yards below the Abbey, where an angle in the river brought it in contact with a road to the village of Welbourne, a bridge had been constructed for the accommodation of foot passengers ; and though the uncouth fabric seemed but little calculated to resist the force of the winter floods, it had in its apparent weakness withstood so many, that moss and ivy and some trailing weeds had found time to weave themselves in, amongst the rough-hewn timber of which it was composed.

Never was the eye of the poet or the painter blind to the beauties of a rustic bridge ; and Allan Grey would at any time have gone half a mile out of his way to cross this, in preference to the compact and massive arch by which the river was spanned a little higher in its course.

On the present occasion, when he was flying, a voluntary exile from all he loved, it may be supposed that he would pause on this familiar and frequent resting-place, to gaze upon a scene which, whether arrayed in sunshine, or obscured by gloom, possessed all the charms of beauty to his partial eye.

Far in the distance he could now perceive the lights, unwonted at this hour, glancing from the windows of his home, and giving out their silent but convincing evidence, that a great and stirring event was at hand.

How different was the aspect of the Abbey, shrouded in its mantle of ivy, from amongst which one only light was visible. It was the light that burned all night in Cathleen's cham-

ber ; and Allan wondered whether she slept, or thought of him. While over the whole, whitening the masses of green ivy as with sheeted silver, and marking the outline of the ancient walls with the blackness of contrasted shadow, fell the full radiance of an autumnal moon, whose smile upon the glancing waters, reminded the musing poet of the love that is cast away upon a worthless and inconstant object. The river, too, that seemed on summer evenings to be lingering to catch the burden of his thoughts, now hurried past him like a friend who rushes on, regardless of the fate of his companions, and intent only upon the accomplishment of his own desires.

“Ungrateful stream !” said Allan, as he bent over the side of the bridge, where the eddying waters, baffled in their wild career, curled in white foam around the ancient rafters, and tore away, as if in fury and revenge, the clustering weeds which a summer’s growth had strewn around them—“Ungrateful stream ! upon thy

bosom I have poured forth my fondest, happiest thoughts—upon thy bosom I have wept—upon thy bosom I have found repose, when banished from the world. Thou hast been to me like a dear and early friend; and now, in my hour of loneliness and desolation, thou wilt not listen to my sad farewell.”

Long did Allan remain in this musing posture, for there is something in the rush and the strife of troubled waters, that seems to chain us down within the sound of that deep and awful voice. As he gazed upon the river and its verdant banks, upon the trees, and the fields, so familiar to his eye, the days of his childhood rose before him, and the recollection of his mother brought with it that yearning of the heart, peculiar to our moments of weakness, when we mourn the loss of some imaginary treasure, never to be regained—some shelter from the storms of life, that we persuade ourselves we once enjoyed—some ideal good, of which we feel as if the cruel world had robbed us.

“What might I not have been !” said Allan Grey, and he clasped his hands in an agony of despair, to think of what he was. “Disappointed, useless, blighted, and forlorn !”

In another moment he had bent his knee, and looking devoutly up to the cloudless sky, he implored the great Father of heaven to have compassion on his abject state, to fortify him for the fiery trial he had yet to undergo, and to be near him through the dreary future, when he should walk the earth alone.

“Bless that parent,” he added fervently, “whose mistaken sense of duty has made me what I am. Bless those whose hearts are bounding with anticipated happiness. Bless that devoted sister who has been the stay and the comfort of my life. And oh ! pour out thy choicest blessing upon that pure spirit, about to seek its everlasting home with thee !”

Rising from his posture of supplication, he looked once more to the window where the only light that was now visible remained. It

was a long and steady gaze, in which his soul seemed to be labouring with thoughts too deep for words; and then, turning with reluctance from the well-known scene, he crossed the foaming stream—the barrier between his home and the wide world.

CHAPTER IX.

THE morning dawned upon the bridal party with the glimmering brightness that frequently ushers in a cloudy day, and sometimes a tempestuous evening. Autumn had already assumed a sombre character, yielding occasionally to that of wintry gloom ; and while the sunbeams played amongst the sere and rustling leaves, or danced upon the masses of moist and matted herbage which strewed the ground, nature herself seemed to be wearing a smile of languid beauty, ominous of her approaching decay.

The first hour of day-light had but just expired, when Mary Grey gently opened Harriet's door. She knew her sister had been stirr-

ing long before, for she had heard her curtains withdrawn, her window opened, and her feet pacing many different times along the floor of the chamber; and yet when she entered, Harriet rubbed her eyes, and yawned, as if but just awaking from a long unbroken sleep.

There were no luxuries of the toilet allowed at Welbourne House, and Mary cheerfully attended upon her sisters to render them all the assistance her naturally good taste and ready hand afforded. As cheerfully she sustained the raillery of her aunt, who took every opportunity, public and private, of wishing her the good luck of her sisters, and encouraging her with the idea that her turn would come next. But it was not quite so cheerfully, that she read in the uniform placidity of Ellen's countenance, something too much like indifference to the interest naturally attaching to the circumstance of a young girl departing from her father's roof, and committing herself for life to the protection of a comparatively new and un-

tried friend ; along with the trembling fears, the deep anxieties, and the solemn thoughts with which every sensitive and serious mind must regard the duties belonging to the most sacred earthly union.

Harriet Grey was dressed for the occasion with uncommon splendour, and it became her well ; for though not strictly speaking beautiful, she had that lightness and elasticity of form and manners—that bright, animated, and almost flashing countenance, with which the richness and elegance of personal ornament is in perfect keeping ; and when she descended to the party below, and looked and smiled upon her friends, it would have needed an able physiognomist to pronounce that she was not happy.

The same skill would have been required to decide whether Mr. Maxwell or his brother bridegroom was experiencing the most perfect satisfaction ; the one in the idea that the season of probation was ended, and his bride looking

full as lovely and as fashionable as Sir Henry Belgrave's lady—the other, that all his fond enthusiastic dreams of domestic felicity were about to be realized.

Never had Terence Malone looked so handsome or so interesting as on this eventful morning. Really affected by the solemnity of the occasion, his exuberant vivacity was exchanged for a more than common degree of manly grace; and while his fine eyes were animated with the deep gladness of his soul, his subdued and quiet manner betrayed the genuine contentment of a mind whose peace is unruffled by any anxious cares, and whose sunshine is unclouded by any gloomy anticipations of the future.

But of all the party, Ellen Grey looked most entirely what the poet would have dreamed of as the inspiring subject of his lay—what the painter would have delineated in the proudest exhibition of his skill. Hers was the kind of beauty which personal ornament

can neither heighten nor obscure. So glowing, striking, and pre-eminent, that we see and think of it alone. In accordance with the purity of Mary's taste, she had adopted a dress of the most simple, yet elegant description. All that she wanted, was the life-giving impress of a sensitive and ardent soul; and even this defect appeared to be supplied, when, on entering the room where the family were assembled, she found herself attracting the gaze of every eye. A deep blush then stole for one moment over her fair countenance, and she turned to her sister Mary, as if imploring the protection of a superior and guardian spirit.

And Mary, who stood by, with her dark and braided hair, her pale cheek, her white and simple dress, did look superior to both her sisters, though holding a station of little comparative interest or importance. But her superiority was of a kind more felt than seen, and perhaps felt only in the full force of its beauty, by those who can read in the eye the language

of the heart, who can trace the changes of the countenance to their intellectual source, and who can appreciate the excellence of a pure and elevated mind. To the vulgar observer, Mary Grey looked nothing more than lovely, placid, and sincere; and though every individual who experienced her disinterested kindness, had learned to set a high value upon her services, there was but one in the surrounding circle who loved her exclusively for her own intrinsic worth.

This friend was Catherine Lee; and though scarcely her senior in years, she stood beside her like an elder sister, whose high commanding beauty seemed to extend a kind of patronage over Mary's more retiring charms.

Through the whole business of preparation, Harriet Grey had maintained an appearance of vivacity, which, whether genuine or assumed, convinced all who beheld her, that she regarded her own situation as a happy and enviable one; but no sooner were the carriages heard at the

door, than she became deadly pale, and her difficult and irregular breathing rendered it necessary for Mary to lead her aside, and administer the usual restoratives, which she now swallowed in double quantity.

“Harriet! dear Harriet!” said her sister, shocked beyond measure, “do you know what you are doing?”

“I know too well!” was the hurried reply; and Harriet returned to her friends with the colour restored to her cheeks, her eyes reanimated, and her face illuminated with smiles.

The road by which the procession moved on towards the village church, where Stephen Grey deemed it most seemly for his daughters to be married, led almost directly past the Abbey, and near to that part of it where Cathleen was now the only occupant. Mary looked up. A tall white figure stood within a gothic window, surrounded by wreaths of clustering ivy. As they drew nearer, Cathleen waved a white handkerchief, and smiled; but

Mary, who looked always beyond the surface of things, saw plainly that tears were in her eyes, and that the white handkerchief was raised again to hide them.

What were the thoughts then visiting that lonely chamber, none can tell; but when the returning carriages rolled over the bridge, and the echo of their rattling wheels startled the jackdaws from the ruined tower that marked the uninhabited portion of the Abbey, there was no pale watcher at the window, nor any sign of human life within or around the walls.

The first event that occasions a lasting separation in a family, whether it be a marriage or a funeral, is necessarily attended with some share of melancholy feeling, from which the parting at Welbourne House was not exempt. Even Stephen Grey was softened; and although he had never been regarded by his children with true filial affection, they could not speak the solemn word farewell—a word that was to constitute a sort of barrier between his home

and theirs, without feeling that he was their father still.

For his daughter Ellen he went so far as to extend his arms, and when she received his last embrace, it was with a grace so perfect, that no one could perceive its want of warmth

To Harriet he was less condescending ; while she, always subject to sudden impulses, appeared to be perfectly overwhelmed on taking leave of a parent whom she had never even professed to love. Perhaps it was the thought that she had not always done him justice—that he in his turn had had much to bear—that he might have cherished her infancy with a kindness which time had effaced from her memory—or perhaps it was a combination of many vague thoughts and feelings, to which the excitement of her own mind had given a force entirely new. Whatever it might be, the influence upon her heart was to humble—to soften—to subdue ; and speechless with her own emotions, she bent her knee for a moment

before her father, and raised his hand to her lips.

This tacit acknowledgment of her own delinquency—this mute appeal to his paternal feelings—this solemn and respectful adieu, was not appreciated as it should have been; and coldly, but with great propriety, pronouncing his parting benediction, Stephen Grey permitted his daughter to rise and turn away unnoticed, with tears upon her cheek, which ought to have been wept upon his bosom.

This slight but perfectly intelligible repulse, had the effect of strengthening Harriet for what she had yet to pass through; when a single look or word of more than common kindness would have wholly overthrown her fortitude, and reduced her to the helplessness of a child. It was, therefore, well for the firmness and equanimity of her external deportment that her father did not enter into the pathos of her feelings. But oh! it is ruinous to the moral character, to sear the heart with a repulse at

such moments as these. A *system* of cruelty hardens the moral frame; but a single instance of confidence repulsed, of humiliation despised, of the public and unwonted exhibition of genuine affection as openly contemned, stamps it with a frightful and indelible scar, which no after circumstance, and no lapse of time can in any degree efface.

It is a dreary hour when the bridal party are all gone, and the remaining members of a family look around upon their vacant rooms, and think of those who never more will call that home their own.

Mary Grey would gladly have retired to her own chamber, to indulge the grief so natural to a sister thus deserted, had not her attention been claimed by active and pressing duties, into which she plunged at once, without allowing herself time for selfish sorrow. And Catherine Lee was ever at her side, consulting, and advising, even about things of trifling moment, with the mild cheerfulness of one acquainted

with the happy art of charming wandering thoughts into their proper channel, and weaning the oppressed or wounded soul from brooding over its own sufferings.

The first and highest duty resting upon Mary and her friend, they now hastened to perform. It was to visit Cathleen in her loneliness, and to help to raise her drooping spirits.

They found her looking more ill, more desolate, and more depressed, than their worst fears had pictured; for accustomed to the unremitting tenderness of Allan Grey, and the kind attentions of her brother, she had missed them both more than she had previously thought it possible she could.

Allan's step along the winding passage, his voice than which no music was ever sweeter, and his smile with its perpetual assurance of the affection that words are unequal to describe, were all to her substantial blessings, upon which she had become so dependent for her daily supply of happiness, that she felt in his

absence as if her very life would pass away, for want of its firmest and dearest support.

Although but a few moments had elapsed between the departure of the bridal party and the appearance of Catherine and Mary at the Abbey, the poor invalid had thought them long in coming; for she felt just then as if of all existing creatures she was the most neglected, and the most forlorn. Not that Cathleen was either selfish or exorbitant in her requirings; but she had spent a restless, feverish night, and these are thoughts that will arise sometimes after long continued illness, though happily they do not long remain with an amiable and generous mind.

“What an endless morning this has been!” said she, extending a hand to each of her friends, while a slight contraction of her brow expressed a degree of impatience to which she was but seldom subject.

“I have been so tenderly nursed,” she added, “have found such untiring companionship in

those who loved me, and have been so accustomed to the soothing of a kind and gentle voice, that I cannot endure this loneliness with common fortitude."

Catherine observed, how much such a sense of loneliness was increased by living in a large and partially inhabited building like the Abbey.

"Yes," said Cathleen, looking mournfully towards the window, "and by the season of the year—by the long evenings, and the heavy rains, that make one think of darkness, and damp earth, and many dreary things, of which I dare say your sisters, Mary, are not dreaming."

"My sisters," replied Mary, "looked dismal enough before they left us. I wish you could have seen them."

"What in their dismals?"

"No, in their bridal dresses."

"I did see Harriet. She stole away with Terence, like a good creature as she is, to bid me farewell; and though I never saw her look so well before, there was a wild expression

in her eye that almost startled me. It is a close question to ask you, Mary, but do you think she is marrying that man with all her heart, as you and I should marry?"

Mary hesitated how to answer.

"Nay, do not think yourself compelled to reply to my impertinence, I will not press the subject farther. But you know, Miss Lee, we invalids are allowed the privilege of talking. And this reminds me, that I have a great favour to ask of you—a favour that I fear will sound still more impertinent than my question. I will therefore ask it for *pity's sake*, and I do not think you will deny me."

"Speak freely," said Catherine and Mary with one voice, "we only desire to know your wishes."

"Well, then, I am almost ashamed to ask it; but I must beg that you will not leave me—that is, that you will not both leave me, until—"

"Until Terence and Ellen return?"

"No, not so long as that; but until I am

like myself again, with Allan at my side, when I shall trouble no one but him, poor fellow."

"We promise that most cordially; but when do you expect him?"

"To-morrow, at the latest. It might be this evening. Yet I hardly wish it, for I see the clouds are gathering, and I fear we shall have a wet and stormy night. You see how I expose my weakness, Miss Lee—*Catherine*, may I call you?"

"Pray do. I shall feel more happy if you will."

"Well, then, *dear Catherine*, for since you are so good a friend to Mary, you cannot but be dear to me, can you bear with a poor childish creature, who never in her life knew what it was to have her faults corrected?"

"I am so much accustomed to the society of the sick and the suffering," replied Catherine, "that you could never exhaust my interest, or my love, even if your faults were twice as numerous as they are; and if you should have

become weary of those faults, there is no occupation that would afford me so much enjoyment as that of assisting you to correct them."

"Ah! but if the opinion I have formed of Catherine Lee be correct, you are a good, a noble, an exalted woman, so far removed from common failings, that you cannot enter into the extreme littleness of a mind like mine."

"If I did not believe you were jesting," replied Catherine, "I should be both grieved and shocked to think how false an estimate you had formed of my character."

"Then blush with all your might, for I never was more serious."

"I believe," said Mary, well pleased to find that Cathleen was recovering her habitual cheerfulness, "I must interrupt your mutual confessions by taking my leave; for you know my father has a party of friends dining with him to-day, and I dare not, though I gladly would, be absent."

“ But you will come again, Mary ?” said Cathleen, with an anxious and imploring look.

“ You may depend upon my coming the first moment I am at liberty ; for independent of the attractions I leave behind me, there is one of the party from whose presence I am always glad to escape.”

“ What the worthy rector ?”

Mary blushed, and smiled contemptuously ; for the rector of Branden, who had that day performed the marriage ceremony, had lately been somewhat pointed in his attentions to her ; and the open encouragement he received from her father, added to the license he allowed himself in his general conduct, particularly at the dinner table, rendered him, in the pure eyes whose favour he evidently sought, one of the most repulsive of human beings.

It is a curious study, involving much acquaintance with the human heart, to observe in what particular situations people may be

said to be, or not to be, in their natural element.

Mary Grey was never less agreeably circumstanced, than when subjected to the officious attentions of the rector of Branden,—a man wholly unacquainted with any higher virtues in a woman than those of superintending the culinary department of her household, and receiving all the knowledge necessary for her, in silent gratitude, from the nobler sex.

Mary was one of those domestic agents who can officiate behind the scenes, and yet look perfectly disengaged before her guests; as if the affairs committed to her management were regulated by a secret spell, solely dependent upon the impulse of her will, and extending its influence through innumerable channels, without the aid of manual effort. No one seated as the mistress of the table could look more regardless than she did of the flavour of the different viands spread before her, or the mode of their preparation. And yet, when the rec-

tor, a round-faced, rosy little man of fifty, after fastening the napkin in his button hole, and regaling himself with the first mouthful of fish or soup, found time to look about and make himself agreeable, his method of doing so, was by remarking upon the excellence of every dish, and addressing his remarks with pointed emphasis to Mary.

Nothing could exceed the gravity and importance with which his opinion on these weighty matters was delivered. His gravity in the pulpit was a trifle to it. But when his hour of solid satisfaction was over—the only hour in which he seemed to be devoting himself to the real business of life,—when his eyes rolled round, and he saw no possibility of eating more—it was then that he resigned himself exclusively to pleasure; and softening the whole expression of his countenance, he uttered in a low and silvery voice all the sweet flatteries he ever found an opportunity of pouring into Mary's ear.

Unfortunately for the effect of his eloquence, it was accompanied by such indubitable evidence of his low estimate of female intellect, that it had little chance of producing any high degree of pleasure, wherever it might be directed.

If politics were the subject of general discourse, he would turn to Mary, and explain, almost as clearly as they are generally explained, the nature of Whig and Tory principles; adding in a concise and authoritative manner, "The Radicals you know, Miss Grey, are the people who burn the corn ricks in the midland counties."

If the conversation turned upon religion, he was equally instructive; and if the liberal sciences or fine arts by any chance were introduced, he would tell his mute companion (for he could talk and tell on any subject,) what we owed Sir Humphry Davy for his invention of the safety lamp, and how Raphael, an Italian, and the chief of painters, was he who designed the cartoons.

This remark, so dreaded by Mary, because of its long train of consequences, invariably led to the question, "You have been in London, Miss Grey?"

As invariably he was answered "No."

Then followed the elevation of his little rosy hands, in often repeated astonishment; while his mouth formed itself into the character of a round O, before he burst forth into a description, which never yet had come to any but a violent end, of the Tower, the theatres, the Zoological Gardens; in short, of all that is described at full length in a little child's book called "City Scenes."

It was always a point of great importance with his auditor to stop this tide of eloquence; and on the present occasion, when Mary had some real business to transact with the rector, which had made her listen, or appear to listen, more respectfully than usual, she contrived, with considerable ingenuity, to connect some part of the discourse with his own position in the church.

All people have their favourite subjects, and with the rector this subject was himself. Touch upon it, and he forgot all others.

“ I hear,” said Mary, when this favourable crisis occurred, “ that you are wanting an assistant in your clerical duties.”

“ I do, indeed, Miss Grey, desire to exchange some of my public cares for that repose and that enjoyment which domestic life affords.”

And he bent his head, and looked as languishing as his extremely short and thick-set person would permit. But Mary went on, without once raising her eyes.

“ There is a young man whom I should like very much to recommend to your notice, but that I am aware it is hardly within a woman’s province to interfere in these matters.”

The rector’s countenance changed at the thought of a “ young man ;” but he resumed his smiles as soon as Mary added, “ a very young man, the brother of Catherine Lee, who has lately entered into holy orders.”

“ My dear madam,” replied the rector, “ the slightest wish of yours is law to me ; yet you must be aware that I am not the only person to apply to on this occasion.”

“ I merely apply to you, because I think you might, in this instance, dispense with the interference of Lady Nugent. If I had the slightest acquaintance with her ladyship, believe me I would not trouble you.”

“ Speak not of trouble, my dear Miss Grey—for you, what is there that I would not do, or dare ?”

“ It is not for me that I ask you to exert your influence, but for a highly talented and excellent young man, who wants the means of buying interest, and is wholly destitute of influential friends.”

“ I thought the young man, Herbert Lee, had had a brother, much belied, if he possesses not a high place in Lady Nugent’s favour.”

“ That brother has been applied to ; but he has so entirely withdrawn himself from his family and early friends, that they place little

dependence upon his influence. I appeal to you as a more efficient help, and I cannot persuade myself that I shall be disappointed."

As Mary said this, she rose from the table with a look so gracious, that the rector, bowing her to the door, promised (for he could not well do less) to remember her request, and, if possible, to satisfy her benevolent wishes.

The remaining party consisted of Stephen Grey, his two sons, Mr. Wells a neighbouring farmer, and the rector already introduced. Beneath the grave imposing presence of the master of the house, conversation would soon have flagged, in spite of the excitement his unwonted hospitality afforded ; but that, unable to reconcile such waste of time with his confirmed habits of economy and business, he took an early opportunity of resigning his place to his son James, and retiring to his study, made such arrangements amongst his books and papers as he seldom found time for, except on

idle days; which, indeed, were days of rare occurrence to him.

James Grey looked in all respects so efficient a representative of his predecessor, that it seemed, at first, too probable he might impose the same restraint; but he soon proved that he possessed a depth and a tact unknown to his plain-dealing, upright father. He could, when he chose, be affable, courteous, and almost gay, and he had reasons for being so on the present occasion; taking all the time especial care to keep his own head clear, though it suited his purpose to make the wine circulate with freedom, so as effectually to confuse the rational powers of every mind except his own.

It is probably not difficult to find topics of interesting conversation for a party thus excited, where internal stimulus gives life and character to every remark; but had it required more than common skill to draw forth the colloquial powers of every person present, James Grey was prepared for the task: for his father had a law-

suit pending, in which he, of course, was employed ; and it was of the utmost importance to them both to obtain some information, either from Mr. Wells or the rector, which in their sober moments they would not be very likely to give.

Whilst a long discussion, interrupted only by occasional sallies of wit was going on amongst the parties concerned in this affair, George Grey was in all his glory, the lights already dancing before his eyes ; the faces of his companions, and every illuminated object growing brighter, but less defined ; and all mental impressions, of which he could never boast an extraordinary number, gradually yielding to mere bodily sensation.

In this manner the evening passed away, until Stephen Grey, recollecting that he had not partaken of the refreshment of tea, a beverage to which he was particularly addicted, drew out his watch, and started to find it ten o'clock.

“ These late hours,” said he, “ derange every

thing ;” and he hastened out of his study to see why tea was not prepared.

In passing along the hall, he was alarmed by sounds of a nature very unusual in his house. He paused for a moment ; it was a comic song, and in the chorus three voices at least were joining. A peal of laughter followed. He thought that madness, or rather some of the evil spirits of old, must have taken possession of his guests ; and throwing open the door of the dining-room, presented himself before the jovial party, who were already too much elated to care who looked upon their revelries.

“ My dear father,” said James Grey, advancing with an uncommonly bland and soothing manner, for he, too, had partaken, though in a comparatively moderate degree, of the same excitement, “ Spare your astonishment, and I will explain all.”

“ Explain what ?”

“ I will explain why these gentlemen are a little more disposed to merriment than may seem

consistent with the character of your household."

"Explain why they are drunk, you had better say at once," replied Stephen Grey, with the most indignant scorn; "and certainly it would be edifying in the extreme, to hear of a good reason for their being as they are."

While James was again taxing his ingenuity for an apology, another song commenced, for which the powers of poor George were so entirely inadequate, that he only succeeded in producing an occasional response, by no means the most melodious part of the performance.

With eyes and mouth wide open, he met the concentrated fury of his father's gaze; and aware that something decidedly ill-timed had happened, burst into a loud and idiotic laugh.

Stephen Grey was immediately roused to action. He was a powerful, athletic man; and seizing his son by the collar, he dragged him through the hall, and hurled him down the steps at the door, though the rain was falling in torrents.

Hastening back to secure every bolt and bar about the house, he was met by James, who so far from defending his brother from this ill-judged violence, bewailed his lamentable propensity, and spoke of the vice of drunkenness with the greatest horror and disgust.

We have before said that Stephen Grey was a plain-dealing man, though stern in his temper, and prejudiced in his opinions. He could not, therefore, understand why one who had so great a horror of this vice, should encourage it in others; and James, like every man who undertakes to defend a bad cause, was under the necessity of justifying himself by adding falsehood to dissimulation—by throwing all the blame upon his brother's desperate and degraded habits, and pretending that he had stood his own ground from principle, and for the sake of showing an example of sobriety to others.

His father directed towards him a keen inquiring look. The expression of his countenance bore few marks of derangement; and

while he pleaded in his own defence, it was even serious and demure.

“By why did you remain in such company?” asked Stephen Grey, half relenting; “I should have deemed it a better example to have left them altogether.”

“Ah! my dear father, I want nothing but time to explain myself. By remaining with the company, I certainly exhibited a proof in my own person, that a man may be cheerful with his friends, and yet keep sober. Yet so repulsive to my feelings is this kind of society, that I should hardly have subjected myself to its contamination for any length of time, had I not found by the turn of the conversation, that it would be possible to elicit some information respecting the disposal of the title deeds, and other particulars of the utmost importance to us both, just now.”

“And have you obtained this information?”

“I have.”

Stephen Grey was pacified; but he would

not have been so had his son betrayed the slightest sign of inebriety ; for having never felt the least temptation to that vice himself, he hated and despised it from his very soul.

There were yet two obnoxious individuals with this taint upon them, remaining in the house ; and it became a point of serious consideration how to have them removed.

“ Perhaps,” said James in a mild, conciliatory tone, “ all things taken into account, it might not be amiss to treat them with respect.”

“ Respect ! what for men who are drunk ?”

“ Not drunk, dear father, only a little excited ; and the treatment I would recommend, signifies nothing more than outward respect, due more to their station in life than to the men themselves. You know you can afterwards advise with them as friends, or if you think it right, discard them from your friendship altogether.”

“ That man—that rector of Branden, shall never marry my daughter Mary. No, she may

break her heart about him ; but I here declare my solemn resolution, that he never shall !”

“That is a great deal to say, my dear father, for a single transgression. We are all weak, and liable to go astray.”

“We are. And had he filled an ordinary station, I might have forgiven one offence ; but for a minister of the gospel ! No, I never can encourage that man, by offering him my countenance again !”

After much skilful pleading on the part of James, it was at last agreed that the two gentlemen should not be thrust out of the house, as Stephen Grey had first proposed, but sent to their respective dwellings in his own gig, a roomy conveyance that proved quite large enough to hold the two discarded guests and the servant who was to drive them. And no sooner had they left the door, than it was again bolted with violence, as if to prevent any inquiry being made respecting the fate of their less fortunate companion.

Stephen Grey was not at all aware, that moral discipline must inevitably be thrown away upon persons in a state of actual inebriety; that no lasting good impression can be made upon the mind at such a time, but that evil passions may be strengthened into brutal fury, and reckless characters driven to lawless desperation. He acted rather upon the principle of some injudicious women, who waste their tears and their reproaches upon intoxicated husbands, thus producing the natural consequence of making them prolong the jovial hour, out of very dread of the tempest awaiting their return.

When George Grey was violently thrust forth from his father's door, he had just sense enough to know that some public indignity had been practised upon him, and just feeling enough left to burn to revenge it. The night, too, was dark and tempestuous, and there was something in the grating of the bolts as they barred him out, that made a very demon of

him. With the force of this mental excitement, he regained some use of his bodily powers, and raising himself from the ground, while he shivered with the wet already penetrating through his clothes, he staggered towards the stable along a path so familiar to his feet, that he had little difficulty in making good his entrance. It was quite indifferent to him whose horse he mounted. Habit directed him to his own, and striking spurs into its sides, he galloped over the bridge, never halting for one moment, until he reached a door situated under one of those pendulous signs which the animal had learned to know almost as well as its master.

Beneath the shelter of this humble roof he remained for many days, in a state which it is not necessary farther to describe.

So much has already been said on this disgusting topic, that some apology seems to be needed from a female hand. This apology must be, that it was necessary for the moral of

the story, to prove, that if innocent and rational enjoyment is not permitted in the moral education of children—if they are not systematically introduced to such pleasures as ought to constitute their happiness; they will, in conformity with the dictates of nature, find pleasures of their own; and the danger is, that such will be of a gross, degrading, or unlawful nature.

CHAPTER X.

MARY GREY and her friend spent the evening we have just described, with great satisfaction, at the Abbey; for Catherine, whose mental faculties had been early strengthened and improved under the system of rational happiness and freedom, possessed great conversational powers; and it was both a duty and a pleasure to exercise them in beguiling the thoughts of the poor sufferer from "hope deferred," and leading them as much as possible, into a more peaceful and profitable channel. While Cathleen, whose mind was less powerful than fertile and refined, seemed exactly calculated to appreciate the value, and rest on the support of a congenial, but superior spirit.

She was, indeed, exhausted but not weary, anxious, but not depressed ; and though she listened every moment to the raging storm, started at every sound, and looked miserably disappointed when the approaching step, which her quick ear had traced from the lower range of rooms, proved to be only that of a domestic, she was evidently soothed and invigorated by the society of her faithful friends, in whose conversation she joined with more than common cheerfulness.

It was with great reluctance that Mary tore herself away from a scene entirely congenial to her taste and feelings ; but the hour of the night reminded her of the necessity of returning to her father's house ; and, committing her patient to the care of Catherine Lee, whose kindness and skill in attending upon the sick, were both unrivalled, she wrapped herself in a cloak, and, with a lantern in her hand, pursued her way alone across the fields.

On entering the garden walk which led to her

father's door, she was alarmed by the unusual sounds then issuing from the dining room ; and, fearful of coming in contact either with her father in his anger, or with any of his convivial guests, she stole quietly to her own room ; and thus escaped the pain of knowing all that transpired on that luckless, and eventful night.

The next morning rose with threatening gloom, and the rain still fell tempestuously ; but Mary waited only for the departure of her father and her brother James, before she flew to the Abbey, where a gloom corresponding with that of the elements without, pervaded the chamber of the invalid.

Cathleen had passed a feverish and almost sleepless night, succeeded by its natural consequence—extreme languor and depression. To her the aspect of the whole world was changed ; and when others hailed the dawn of daylight with a lively sense of the renewed possession of all the faculties of mental and animal existence, it seemed to bring to her, nothing but darkness and the shadow of death.

“You are very good to me,” she said in a faint voice to Catherine; “you are too good for my deserts; but all your kindness cannot save me. I must die, and then what will become of poor Allan?”

“He is in the hands of a God of mercy,” replied Catherine. “He will be strengthened for his trial.”

“You do not know Allan Grey,” said Cathleen again, with a sigh. “You have not entered into the depths of his soul, as I have. He is not one of those common triflers, who can be satisfied with hopes and affections of a secondary nature.”

“He is,” observed Catherine, “if I read his character aright, one of those enthusiastic and high-minded beings, whose earthly love is the most devoted—whose heavenly, the most devout.”

“You are right. And then, with all his noble aspirations, he is so gentle, and so sensitive, that every thing disturbs or pains him; and I, who know so well what he is suffering—

I, who with all my faults, have become part of his existence—yes, I must leave him—so desolate!—so lonely!”—and she burst into an agony of grief, and buried her face in her pillow, with vain efforts to conceal her tears.

Catherine suffered this ebullition of feeling to exhaust its own violence, and when she saw her more composed, resumed the subject whose intense interest could never tire.

“From all that I have learned to think of Allan Grey,” she observed, “he appears to me one of those peculiar characters, for whom we feel assured that earth has no lasting home. How blessed, then, dear Cathleen, is the thought, that for such alien wanderers through this troubled life, there is a home of everlasting rest, where the superior endowments this world is incapable of appreciating, may be unfolded to the eternal glory of their Creator.”

A theme had now been inadvertently touched upon, so strangely prolific to an imagination like Cathleen's, that when Mary Grey appeared

with the cordial salutations of the morning, Catherine hailed her with a peculiar welcome, even for the interruption she had occasioned. For such was the natural construction of Cathleen's mind, and such her habit of indulging with Allan in vague speculations upon things that never were, and never will be revealed to mortal sight; that expatiating in her presence upon the happiness of a future state, instead of tending to excite fervent aspirations after its enjoyment, too frequently gave rise to wandering thoughts of how the promises of a full reward to the righteous would be realized, what would be the precise nature of the punishment dealt out to the disobedient, and all that long catalogue of presumptuous questionings and indefinite surmises, with which the heart, too human in its affections, will sometimes seek to establish its earthly idols in the habitations of the blessed.

Catherine Lee had stood by the death-bed of the destitute and the hopeless, and she had

often laboured successfully with those whose views of eternity extended not beyond the grave ; but in combating the querulous doubts of a young imaginative girl, the fair page of whose life had never been stained with any of those wilful transgressions which alarm the conscience with a sense of the “ exceeding sinfulness of sin,” she found an unexpected, and apparently insurmountable difficulty, in attempting to settle her thoughts with firmness and stability upon the only substantial ground of faith and consolation.

To glowing and poetical descriptions of heaven, such as she had been accustomed to picture it, Cathleen could have listened for ever, with Allan by her side ; but the requisites for obtaining a passport to that better world, as they are clearly defined in the scriptures, were too dull and tame to interest her feelings for any length of time ; and she would turn away impatiently to talk of other things, whenever Catherine or Mary acknowledged their igno-

rance on that point of such immense importance to the impassioned visionary—whether those who have constituted each other's happiness on earth, shall recognise their friends in heaven.

She could think with fervid anticipation of reposing in bowers of bliss, and welcoming home to regions of felicity, those tried and purified spirits who had been doomed to prolong their pilgrimage below—she could lay to her bosom the flattering unction, that she had neither desires nor affections unworthy of exposure in a world of light—that her faults, though many, were only the natural result of human weakness, such as she would gladly submit to the purifying unction of Divine love; and that, if fully assured of the companionship of those she clung to with an earth-born tenderness, she would willingly depart for the land of spirits—depart and be at rest. But the idea of preparing herself for this departure by looking diligently at the precepts of the Son of God, who came to teach us what to do and

what to believe—the necessity of entering heaven solely on the terms prescribed by the holy scriptures ; and trusting in implicit confidence and humility that the enjoyments reserved for the blessed, even if wholly at variance with our preconceived notions of felicity, must be holiest and best, because designed by an all-wise and merciful Father—this was a view of the future, as connected with the present, on which Cathleen closed her eyes in despair that it could ever charm her fancy, or satisfy her wishes.

The day commencing as we have already described, afforded little opportunity for any kind of settled or serious conversation. It was to Cathleen a day of restlessness, anxiety, and distress; augmented by the weariness of every passing hour in which she looked in vain for the return of Allan Grey.

“ We can hardly expect him so long as this weather lasts,” said Mary ; for the gales of the equinox were blowing with tremendous fury,

and black clouds, scudding before the tempest, scattered at intervals their burden of sheeted rain.

In the afternoon, completely overcome with bodily exhaustion, Cathleen fell asleep, forgetting for a while both her hopes and her fears ; but her sleep was succeeded, for the first time, by the partial delirium, belonging to the last stage of her fatal malady.

Possessed with the transient belief that the life she most valued had been terminated by accident or violence, she called upon Catherine and Mary to tell her the whole truth ; and when they exchanged anxious glances with each other, she interpreted their looks into a tacit confession that they had some dreadful secret to reveal.

By degrees, however, she regained her former composure, but the idea seemed to have made an impression that nothing could efface ; and while she listened to the storm without, to the bellowing of the wind among the creaking

boughs, and the rush of the swollen river, her imagination echoed every awful sound, and arrayed each fearful thought in aggravated horrors.

In this state of agitation the evening passed away, and Allan came not with the gathering night. Mary could not leave her; and when she had been prevailed upon to seek the repose that wearied nature so much needed, the two friends sat down in perfect silence, hoping she would sleep again.

She had closed her eyes with a determined effort, and they already began to hope she had found the comfort of forgetfulness, when starting, and looking wildly round, she said in a hurried and anxious tone, "You had better talk to me, for then I shall feel that I am not left alone; and besides, it will break the monotonous roar of that river, whose waters seem to be breaking over my soul."

Catherine offered to sing. She had a sweet, melodious voice; and nothing could have been

more soothing to the sufferer, whose natural love of music had rendered it one of her chief sources of enjoyment.

Again it seemed as though she slept; and Catherine lowered her voice to a gentle murmuring strain, which she would have willingly prolonged through the whole night, had its happy effects continued for that time.

But while perfect silence, except for this sweet melody, reigned throughout the desolate chambers of the Abbey, a tremendous crash was heard without, in the direction of the river; a hissing, gushing sound succeeded, and then a heavier roll as of accumulated waters.

“He is lost!” exclaimed Cathleen, starting from her pillow, while her eyes glared wildly round. “He shrieks—I hear him in his dying agony! It is Allan’s voice—I should know it in the depths of the grave—an ocean of waters could not drown it!”

Again she paused to listen. Mary had drawn aside the curtains, and was looking from

the window. The moon still shone in fitful radiance as she struggled through her cloudy pathway, and Mary saw distinctly that the wooden bridge had yielded to the violence of the stream, and that the river now hurried on in a broad foaming tide, apparently without control or limitation.

Cathleen eagerly demanded of her what she saw.

"I see," she replied, "a wide swollen stream, extending over the meadows, almost as far as the pathway."

"And the bridge?—poor Allan's bridge?"

"The bridge I cannot see."

"Then it has given way, and he is lost, for I heard his shriek as distinctly as I hear your voice. Fly, Mary! let us all fly, for possibly we may save him yet!"

Catherine held her back, for in her frenzied horror she would actually have risen, and might possibly have attempted to face the storm; while Mary, who would willingly

have done more than she required to save her from a single heart-ache, hesitated not a moment, but hastened down, and succeeded in reaching an elevated piece of ground, commanding a full view of the sweeping course of the flood.

All she could see was the pale moon above, contrasted with the dark clouds that passed rapidly before her face—the bursting waves below, and the tops of the shrubs that grew upon the banks of the river. All she could hear was its deep and awful voice, mingled with the moaning of the blast, and the crackling of the shattered boughs.

“You need not look so calm,” said Cathleen, immediately on her return. “I know you have found him. You cannot deceive me. Allan is dead—drowned in this horrible gulf; while the light of my window was before his eyes.”

Catherine and Mary both assured her that her fears were groundless, that there was no reason to suppose he would venture out in such

a storm ; and if he had, that it was scarcely possible his favourite bridge should, under such circumstances, have tempted him to cross it.

In vain they reasoned with her, in vain they pleaded with her to be more composed. She spent the remainder of the night in the same state of excitement, talking perpetually in incoherent language of every thing that could possibly aggravate her fears or her distress.

Nor was it until the wind subsided, the clouds dispersed, and the light of morning dawned in peace upon a scene of desolation, that she fell into a long and quiet slumber, which afforded her two friends an opportunity of consigning her to the care of her accustomed attendant, and seeking the refreshment necessary to fit them for the exertions of another day.

To their great satisfaction Cathleen awoke in peace. Her pulse no longer beat with alarming violence ; and, smiling at Mary's humble request that Catherine might accompany her for

a few minutes to her father's house, she granted a cheerful and willing consent, without urging her accustomed charge, that they should return as soon as possible.

"I am a great tyrant," said she, "but go, dear Catherine. You have both much need of rest, and do not return to me until you have enjoyed at least three hours of quiet sleep. I am more reasonable to-day, and I will not, if I can possibly help it, make such unwarrantable demands upon your kindness again."

Notwithstanding this injunction, the morning was not far advanced, before Catherine and Mary were once more upon the path leading from Welbourne House to the Abbey; and which from being considerably higher than the adjoining meadows, allowed them to approach without danger to the brink of the flood.

Interested in a scene so novel, they remained some time pacing to and fro upon this path, and Mary, who had hitherto had little time for confidential conversation with her friend,

took this opportunity of questioning her on a subject, always introduced with reluctance, at the same time that it possessed so much interest with those who were deservedly dear to her, that to allow it to remain altogether unnoticed, might argue an indifference, with which she would have been sorry indeed to be justly charged.

“ I have spoken to the rector,” she said, “ on behalf of your brother Herbert, and he promises well ; although I cannot help fearing that his servile regard for Lady Nugent’s opinion will leave the situation open to whomsoever she may think fit to prefer.”

“ If Elliott was like himself,” said Catherine, “ or rather, if he was interested as he ought to be in his brother’s welfare, he would not suffer this appointment to be left to chance ; for in Herbert’s state of health it is of the utmost importance to our happiness, that he should be near some kind and friendly family, and if he could be settled at Welbourne, or even at Bran-

den, for awhile, he would be near you, dear Mary, who are a host in your own person."

"I need not scruple to promise," replied Mary, "that I would be a sister to him; if that is what you call a host. But have you written to Elliott about him?"

"We have, more than once."

"And received no answer?"

"Not a word. Yet he may not have forgotten us for all that; for we have occasionally received proofs of his remembrance, when he would not by his own hand acknowledge that we held any place in his thoughts."

"Well, Catherine, you may say what you will in his defence; but I do maintain, that the son who can forget his widowed mother is unworthy of the name."

"I assure you he does not forget us—I know he does not."

"Then why does he not give you more substantial proofs of his remembrance? Why does he not—"

“Increase my mother’s income, I suppose you mean.”

“I do.”

“The circumstances I have alluded to, were very liberal presents to her, she never knew from whom ; yet entertained not the slightest doubt they came from him. These, however, she has declined making any use of, except as she says, illness or accident should render it really necessary ; for my mother’s sentiment is, that pecuniary obligations are irksome and objectionable, when not accompanied by a clear understanding, if not also by mutual affection. We ought to be very thankful that we can live so comfortably without his assistance, for I am sure we should be far from comfortable to take advantage of it on such terms.

“Poor Herbert is the only one who feels the slightest difficulty, and he is too generous, too noble-hearted, to complain. He was even averse to our making any application to Elliott

with regard to his appointment in the church ; but my mother and I thought this a case that widely differed from that of asking pecuniary assistance."

"Unquestionably it does," said Mary; "and if he should prove insensible to this appeal, I never can indulge one pleasant hope of him again."

"We must remember," said Catherine, always anxious to defend her brother, "that all applications to the great do not succeed ; and though Elliott is said to possess considerable influence with Lady Nugent, she may have some young favourite of her own waiting for the same introduction."

"It is surprising to me," said Mary, "that your brother should prefer the dubious, irregular life he now leads, to the comforts of a more settled home. It may be gratifying to his taste to associate with the distinguished and the great ; but I should have thought his

heart would be sometimes weary, and that early associations would win him back to his best friends."

"We know not," observed Catherine, "how strong these associations may still be, nor what reasons he may have for resisting their influence. He is a mystery to us all. Do you know any thing of Lady Nugent's real character?"

"Nothing but what Allan told me of his interview with her in town."

"We sometimes think," continued Catherine, "for in such cases, strange surmises will force themselves upon the mind, that he is spell-bound within the magic circle where that lady moves the central star; in short, that his attachment to her is of a more interesting description than would be likely to arise out of mere literary association."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mary; "Lady Nugent is old—besides—"

"I know," replied Catherine, "she has a

son already of age, for Herbert was acquainted with him at college ; but she might have been married young ; and her brilliant conversational powers, added to great personal advantages, may go far towards prolonging the fascinations of youth."

" But you forget," said Mary, still impressed with the egregious and improbable nature of the supposition,—“ you forget that Lord Nugent still lives."

" I know it," said Catherine ; “ and I know, also, that he lives as a mere cypher in his lady's establishment, remembered only when the legality of her title is called in question."

" But you cannot suppose," said Mary, with some warmth, “ that Elliott would forget the fact of his existence ? ”

" Certainly not," replied Catherine ; “ but I can easily imagine that to see a woman of talent, feeling, and high endowments, unequally yoked with an ordinary, and perhaps contemptible character—to see such a woman,

lovely, interesting, and too sensitive, miserable in the midst of all her splendour, might deeply affect the mind of her young admirer, and give rise to a devoted attachment, so refined in its nature, as scarcely to alarm the bosom where it existed."

"It would alarm mine," said Mary, "were I his sister, and conceived it possible for him to be labouring under such a fatal delusion. Yet from all that Allan has told me, I must still take comfort in the idea of Lady Nugent's age, and believe that his regard for her is that of a son, rather than a lover."

"Heaven grant it may!" said Catherine; and by this time the two friends had reached that elevated piece of ground where Mary had stood on the preceding night, and which, by extending to the recent banks of the river, about a hundred yards below the site of the wooden bridge, afforded them an opportunity of beholding some of the shattered portions of that ruined fabric, as well as an

accumulation of branches and other fragments hindered, in their progress down the stream by a little promontory covered with trees and shrubs, whose tough boughs and knotted roots, extending to the edge of the water, formed a natural barrier against the encroachments of the tide.

Upon this point of land, the very point from whence Allan used to launch his boat, they stood for some time, contemplating the ruin wrought by the angry elements; when suddenly, and at the same moment, their eyes were attracted by a mysterious object, half lost in the matted weeds and bubbling eddies, with which it was surrounded.

“It is my brother Allan!” shrieked Mary, and she raised her clasped hands to heaven in an agony of despair.

Catherine approached still nearer to the side of the water. It was but too true; for there he lay, his right hand clenching with the iron grasp of death the bough of a stunted

oak, past which the floods were sweeping, while his beautiful auburn hair floated back upon the stream.

It was but too true. He had left that fatal bridge two nights before, and scarcely heeding where he went, had found a temporary hiding-place at a small town a few miles distant, where he was not known.

Here the people, of whom strict inquiry was afterwards made, reported that he had spent the whole of the succeeding day in writing or reading, without once passing the threshold of the door; that he appeared to be in a state of mental depression; and that sometimes when they entered the room, he was leaning his head upon both his hands, in which attitude he would remain without any sign of intelligence until they had spoken to him many times. They said, that for the first night he was heard until daylight pacing to and fro in his chamber; that on the second, he never left the parlour; that from the dawn

of the next day he watched the tempest with great anxiety, and left them in the afternoon, contrary to their remonstrances; for his mild and gentlemanly behaviour, and his evidently delicate state of health, had interested them deeply in his fate. But, beyond his appearance and his manners, his evident distress of mind, and his strange determination to leave the house while the storm was raging, they knew nothing,—not even his name, or the place of his abode.

It seemed probable that his progress homeward had been considerably retarded by the violence of the tempest; but that he should have attempted to cross the wooden bridge at such a time, could only be accounted for by the force of habit, and by the absorbing nature of his emotions, rendering him for a time insensible to danger.

Certain it was, that he had perished in that overwhelming rush of waters, which swept away all frail impediments; and that his

strength had been exhausted in struggling to break through the accumulation of weeds and branches, and other broken fragments.

“ And the shriek that Cathleen heard !” said Mary, groaning with horror, as she clasped the supporting arm of her friend.

Catherine tried to soothe her with assurances of the impossibility of such a shriek being heard within the walls of the Abbey, and that the idea could only have arisen from the fevered imagination of the invalid. But the thought of what her poor brother might have suffered in that hour of agony, completely overcame the fortitude with which Mary had hitherto sustained the accidents of life, and she sunk senseless at the feet of her friend, who vainly endeavoured to bear her in her arms away from that frightful and distressing scene.

CHAPTER XI.

WELL was it for Mary that she awoke not to the consciousness of grief, until the domestics had been summoned by Catherine from the Abbey, and the lifeless form of her brother was reposing in its marble stillness in one of the spacious apartments of that portion of the ancient building unoccupied by the family, and but seldom entered.

Catherine Lee was one who never lost her presence of mind, so long as there was a friend to serve, or a sufferer to assist. She knew no idle tremors—she made no calculations upon what she herself could do or dare; and now with the firmness and decision

that characterised all her acts of usefulness, she made every arrangement for the peace and quiet of the family, and for those distressing scenes necessarily consequent upon accidental death.

The idea of poor Cathleen was the only one that hung around her, like a chain of iron, whose weight was insupportable; and it was to this appalling thought that Mary awoke on her return to life and all its sad realities.

“Cathleen!” was the first word she uttered, while Catherine chafed her temples, and watched the first faint but living hue that tinged her cheeks.

“Yes, dear Mary, we must think of her, not of ourselves,” was answered in a low sweet voice, for the purpose of recalling the bereaved sister to a quicker sense of the tender offices awaiting her immediate care.

Nor was it long before Mary, who never shrunk from present duty, was enabled to resume her wonted place. While Catherine

willingly took upon herself the sad task of writing letters to the absent, and even of attending to the necessary business of the day, it was Mary's more delicate and painful department to seek the chamber of the invalid.

The two friends, however, had agreed, that the melancholy tidings should not be communicated to Cathleen until after the inquest had been held upon the body, that she might be spared all unnecessary pain.

"I should have reproached you for being so long away," said the unconscious sufferer, as Mary entered the room, "but that you look so deadly pale."

"Dear Mary!" she continued, smiling and extending her hand—"dear sister of my soul, you are suffering severely from the fatigues I have so unreasonably imposed upon you, and perhaps like me, from hourly disappointment. Tell me now, Mary—now that we are quite alone—tell me what you really think of Allan's lengthened absence?"

"I think," replied Mary, and her lips that

were pale as ashes, quivered as she spoke—"I think he has been detained by some unexpected event."

"But do you think it is quite so kind, or so considerate as we should have expected of Allan, to leave me for this incalculable length of time?"

"Dear Cathleen! we know that Allan has always been so kind and considerate, it is not just or generous to blame him now."

"You are right, Mary; for when was Allan thoughtless or negligent of any but himself. May the God of mercy be his guide through every danger, and pardon me the selfishness that makes me profane his pure name with reproaches!"

Mary pressed a kiss upon her forehead, and tried to break the chain of her thoughts by expressing the satisfaction she felt in finding her so calm—so much less feverish and restless than on the preceding day.

"Do you know the reason?" replied Cathleen

quickly. "Oh, Mary, I have had so sweet a dream,—its beauty and serenity seem to linger with me still. I thought I was struggling with the waters of a mighty ocean, that foamed, and yawned, and rose in tremendous billows all around me; yet I glided on, alone, but fearless, in a little boat that worked its way as it were between the waves, until it rested in the silvery bay of a green island, where not a wave nor breath of wind was heard; but pure sweet voices joining in a heavenly symphony, and singing praises to the Father of light.

"Even here there was a sense of loneliness; but as I stepped from my frail bark, and stood upon the glittering sand, a form approached me clad in angelic vestments, and with a glory round his brow. It was the one only being without whose companionship the bowers of paradise would be joyless to me; and while he spoke in human accents, he told me that he was already one of the blessed.

“With these words, there came upon me such an overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness to mingle in that holy fellowship—such a deep consciousness of the necessity of being prepared and purified before I could join in those seraphic strains, that I started at once into all the agony of life, and found myself still a pilgrim in the desert—a wanderer in the wilderness—a lone voyager upon a troubled sea.”

“Cathleen,” said Mary, “I often think there is much to be learned from dreams, for they sometimes strikingly connect the events of the past, with the duties of the present. They seem to strip the familiar subjects of our daily thoughts of all false garniture; and, leaving time, and space, and even possibility without regard, occasionally produce a moral, whose important truth confirms the conviction of our waking hours.”

“Do you think,” said Cathleen, “that my dream had any moral of this kind?”

“I think,” replied Mary, “it is capable of such an interpretation.”

“Then be my good genius, Mary, and expound it to me.”

“I dare not take upon myself so high an office ; and when I speak of the moral of a dream, it is not as I would speak of the moral of a fable, or an allegory, but rather as it is calculated to produce a beneficial effect upon the feelings of one particular individual. As an expounder of dreams, I will not, therefore, presume to say what is the meaning of yours, but as a friend, I will tell you how it strikes my own mind.”

“Speak freely, Mary, I could bear the truth from you, if from any one.”

“Well, then, dear Cathleen, let us first suppose that your imagination is too fertile, your taste too refined, and your range of thought too elevated, for you to be willing to receive the plain practical truths of religion, in the humble manner in which they are usually communicated. Is it, after this, unreasonable to suppose, that in merciful consideration to the peculiar character of your feelings, this poetical

dream has been designed to give you a gentle warning, that no tempest of this lower world is able to overwhelm whom the Lord in his mercy has stretched forth his arm to protect ; that those dear friends we had thought to leave upon their earthly pilgrimage, may be called before us to the world of spirits ; that within the bowers of everlasting bliss no steps impure can tread ; that even to the most lovely and beloved, there is a necessity for preparation ere embarking on the last awful voyage ; and that you, dear Cathleen, the cherished of our hearts, have need to pray earnestly and humbly, that your spirit may be purified for its entrance into the celestial city."

Cathleen, as if pondering deeply upon the words she had just heard, remained silent and thoughtful for some time ; and Mary watched her beautiful countenance, with that intense anxiety which lingers around the lovely and the helpless, when we see impending over

their devoted heads a storm of whose terrors they are themselves unconscious.

"Mary," said Cathleen, suddenly starting from her pillow, "I hear the tread of horses' feet upon the bridge. Who can be coming?"

"My father is probably returning home," said Mary.

Cathleen, whose sense of sound had lately been quickened to intensity by the nervous excitement of her mind, now listened again; and Mary trembled, for she knew that the jury were assembling in a distant part of the Abbey, to sit in solemn consultation around the dead.

"The gates are opened!" exclaimed Cathleen again, "and I hear steps along the pavement leading to the tower. What can it mean? Look out, Mary, and tell me what you see."

Fortunately for Mary, the strange feet that Cathleen heard, were not just then at that side of the building a view of which was commanded by the window where she stood,

and she answered with a clear conscience, "I see nothing but the gardener returning to his work."

Catherine now entered, and expressed by signs to Mary that the inquest was sitting.

"Catherine," said the invalid, holding out her hand, "has anything happened to discompose you? you look hurried, and you have scarcely been with me five minutes during the whole of this day."

"I have been writing letters," replied Catherine; "and one reason why I look so hurried, is because Mr. Grey has returned home; and, knowing that Mary was with you, I hastened to meet him at his own door."

"The return of Mr. Grey is at all times an event of sufficient importance to startle me," said Cathleen, smiling; for though she experienced a transient excitement from every unwonted sound, no serious alarm on Allan's account had possessed her mind since the preceding night.

For it is so sometimes, that in seasons of extreme anxiety, the capacity of apprehending danger appears to be suspended for a time, only to burst upon us with tenfold violence ; and she seemed in her transient and deceitful calm, like some fair sleeper reposing in fancied security beneath the shadow of a gathering storm.

The jury remained so long in consultation, that the evening was far spent before they separated, and as Cathleen's hectic fit was coming on, her two friends deemed it best to let the night pass over, before they told their fearful tale.

She was now all eye and ear, watchful of every appearance, and startled by every sound. With the hurrying of her pulse came fearful thoughts, only the more agitating for being indefinite in their form ; and if ever Catherine and Mary spoke to each other in an undertone—if they did but leave the room together, a strange and terrible suspicion filled her mind,

that some great calamity had befallen either Mary's family or her own.

"And Allan comes not," said she wildly, with the tone and manner of one whose reason is fast verging towards delirium; "he comes not, Mary; where can he be? Have you lost all your powers of soothing, that you sit far off with a tear in your eye? It was not wont to be so in former days. Come nearer to me, Mary, —nearer still. Let me *feel* that you are near me, for the very earth seems to be giving way.

"Now, Mary, let us talk together of pleasant things. You shall tell me some long story of Allan's boyhood, before I came amongst you with my foolish love, that seems to have blighted all his happy prospects."

And in this way she rambled on, until feeble nature was exhausted, and she sighed herself to sleep.

When her eyes were once more closed in forgetfulness, Mary slowly drew away her arm

from beneath her head, and motioning for the nurse to take her place, stole gently down to join her friend in a lower room, where for the first time she gave way to a violent burst of tears.

“Have you seen him?” was the only question that she asked.

“Oh yes,” replied Catherine—“so beautiful—so composed—the expression of an angel is on his face.”

“Let us go together,” said Mary; and taking the lamp from the table, they passed silently across the court yard. Entering that part of the Abbey usually called the tower, by an iron door which grated on its hinges, they next ascended a spiral staircase, and soon found themselves in a spacious apartment in the presence of the dead.

Stephen Grey was seated alone beside the body. He appeared to take no notice of their entrance, but continued to rock slowly to and

fro in his chair ; the only outward sign he exhibited of his deep and silent grief.

The face of the dead was covered, and the afflicted father shaded his with his broad hand, which spanned his forehead, as if by the strong pressure of his temples, it could stun the sense of pain.

As they approached the bier, Catherine gently folded down the white sheet, and the beauty of that still, pale countenance who shall describe ! for, clustering round the snow white forehead, were the curls of auburn hair that used to wave so lightly in the wind ; while the mouth so fine and Grecian in its symmetry, looked as if every moment it would relax into that peculiar smile of sweetness, which those who had lived with Allan Grey, and shared his moments of love and confidence, never could forget. It is true the fair brow was slightly contracted, and Mary shuddered as she thought of the dreadful cause of that unwonted distortion ; but no sound either of grief or horror

escaped her lips, and it seemed to those who held that long remembered vigil, as if they had already entered into the stillness of the grave.

Catherine and Mary had turned their faces from the door which still remained unclosed ; and as they stood, fixed in the fascination of that long look which lingers as if it never could forsake the dead, they were startled by a slight rustling beside the feet of the corpse. In the same instant, they looked up, and beheld a tall white ghostly figure standing near them ; while a shriek of such piercing anguish rung through the wide chambers of the Abbey, echoing beneath the vaulted roof, that for a moment they lost all other sense of present things, in the excruciating torture of that agonizing sound.

It was Cathleen who stood before them, with eyes glaring like those of a maniac, and uplifted hands, as pale, and cold, and far more deathlike than those of the silent sleeper on the bier.

Not long after Mary left her room, she had awoke in dreadful agitation, and seeing the nurse asleep beside her, had stolen softly from her pillow. Out of mere restlessness and impatience at being left alone, she had approached the window, and silently drawn aside the curtains, at the very time when Catherine and Mary, holding the lamp before them, crossed the Abbey yard.

Cathleen saw them enter the unfrequented door, and an intense curiosity, heightened by the most alarming fears, had impelled her to follow them; though without the fitful strength of burning fever, she would scarcely have been able to descend from her own room alone.

The heavy doors of the tower, unaccustomed to move upon their hinges, had all remained open, at least so far as to admit her slight, attenuated figure; and thus she had been enabled to approach even to the very bier, without disturbing the solemn watch that guards the slumbers of the dead.

As if the powers of mental suffering had been all exhausted in that moment of intense agony, the silent mourner subsequently sunk into a state of apparent apathy, from which it would have been neither wise nor merciful to rouse her. In this state the morning dawned upon her without light, and the night closed in without bringing the power to sleep. That sudden revulsion of the life blood to her heart, had been followed by consequences that left her mortal existence suspended as by a thread; and when her faithful attendants stole on tiptoe to the side of her couch, it was in hourly expectation of finding that her eyes were closed for ever. But no; the bright beams of their former beauty still glanced forth with living lustre, though it was evident that whatever object met their sight, no thought or understanding of present things was communicated to the wandering mind.

It was after a whole day of dreary silence that Mary took her place for the night as the

only watcher in the sick chamber, and drawing close to the side of Cathleen's pillow, that she might be sensible of the slightest sign of intelligence, should any such occur, she resigned herself for awhile to the sole influence of melancholy reflections; until her habitual sense of duty reminded her of a better employment of these solemn hours. It was then that she recalled the many forcible and striking proofs that mercy had been mingled with the cup of bitterness, of which she, and those she so much loved, were sorrowfully partaking. She thought of the unspeakable consolation derived from the presence of her friend, of the increased fortitude and resignation with which her poor brother had departed from her presence for the last time, of his unfitness to engage in the rude conflicts of this world, and of the loosening of the bonds of life, which his death might probably occasion to his sad survivor.

As Mary mused upon these things, with an humble desire to see the good and the gracious

in all the dispensations of Providence ; and even where she could not see, to trust ; she was more than ever convinced, that by such exercise of the mind, an abundant harvest of consolation may be reaped, even from the lone wastes of the bleakest desert through which we journey on the pilgrimage of life.

In a central part of the Abbey was a clock, that told the lapse of time in deep and lengthened tones. As Mary counted the hour of ten, a beckoning movement of Cathleen's hand attracted her attention, and she stooped to listen.

"Was not this the hour?" said the poor mourner, in a voice so low, yet clear, that its language seemed more like that of a spirit than of one who lingered in the chains of mortal sorrow.

"It was," replied Mary, not daring by any word or thought foreign to the one only point of interest, to interrupt the sacred stillness which reigned around.

Cathleen was then silent for a long time ; but this single effort seemed to have awakened her to a fresh sense of vital power.

“Come nearer to me, Mary,” were the next words she uttered, in the same low, silvery voice, and Mary stooped again.

“I have some questions to ask you,” she continued, after an interval of silence, that was necessary to renew her ability for conversing; “I have some questions to ask, and you must answer me candidly, for I am not in a situation to be deceived.”

“Say on,” replied Mary, “as concisely as you can. I will answer to the best of my knowledge.”

“Was it the breaking away of the bridge?”

“It was.”

“Was it near the point where a stunted oak grows down to the waterside, that you first saw—”

“Yes, dearest Cathleen, beneath the boughs of that oak.”

“Then what hindered him from reaching the land?”

“The rush of the water, and the accumulation of branches and loose timber.”

“Had he struggled?”

“He had grasped one of the boughs of the oak.”

Cathleen covered her face, and Mary shrunk away from this dreadful probing of their mutual grief. But again Cathleen motioned her to come nearer. She could not speak at first. When she did, it was to ask if that point of ground commanded a view of her own window.

Mary answered that it did; and then clasping her hands in agony, the poor sufferer murmured to herself, as if the thought that moment rushed upon her memory in all its horrors, “Merciful heaven! that shriek!”

“Impossible!” said Mary. “It must have been the howling of the wind.”

“No, no,” replied Cathleen, and again the

partial wildness of delirium returned. "Never tell me of the impossibility of hearing Allan's dying shriek. It would reach me from the centre of the earth. I know I heard it, though it is possible you might not."

Mary disputed this point no farther; and finding that by answering each inquiry promptly, and candidly, all irritation and much excitement might be avoided, she described to Cathleen, whose strength only permitted her to speak at intervals, all the melancholy details she was herself acquainted with, relating to that awful event.

There are characters to whom the real truth is always less distressing than the workings of their own imaginations, operated upon by the darkest fears. Cathleen was one of these; and after searching to the very depths of her calamity, there followed a sweet and holy calm, interrupted only by the recurrence of the hectic fever which was fast hurrying her to the grave.

While she remained in this state, suffering severely, yet mild, and gentle, and most grateful to all who attended around her; sleepless, yet evidently occupied with thoughts too deep for utterance, and too sacred for earthly communion; Terence Malone and his lovely bride returned, not to enliven their home by drawing around its hearth a cheerful circle of congratulating friends, but to share in the funeral rites of one who should have been the chief ornament of that circle, and the first to welcome them home.

The love of Terence for his earliest friend had been such, as to leave no place in his heart on this melancholy occasion for the joy of the bridegroom, or the satisfaction of the man of lately acquired independence; and he followed the procession to the small secluded churchyard of Welbourne, as sincere a mourner as any who stood around the grave.

The first meeting between Terence and his sister had been one of peculiar tenderness,

though sustained with more composure than might have been anticipated from their mutually ungoverned feelings, and the perfect freedom with which they had been accustomed to lay open their souls before each other.

After the sad ceremony of the funeral, Terence sought his sister's chamber, and found her calm and peaceful, like one who waits a welcome summons to follow a departed friend.

"May heaven bless your happy union," said Cathleen, looking affectionately at her brother; "bless you with all that a warm, generous heart like yours is capable of appreciating, and using rightly. Your lot and mine are widely different, Terence; I am wedded to the grave. This blow has struck home, I shall not long be here; and one thing I would ask of you ere my senses leave me, for sometimes I am all confusion, frenzy, and delirium. I would ask you to see that I am laid beside

him, in the churchyard. I think I could not rest in my grave, if strangers were between us.

“This is all foolish you would tell me, but for your tenderness to my feelings ; and I know it is so. Yet for all that, Terence, you will regard the wishes of a weak and dying sister.” And she stretched out her feeble arms, and Terence weeping over her pillow, promised that all her wishes should be faithfully attended to, even to the minutest particular.

Cathleen still clasped him in her faint embrace, and still looked earnestly in his face, as if the whole burden of her mind was not discharged.

“Speak to me, dearest Cathleen,” said her brother. “Fear not. You and I have shared our thoughts and feelings for so many years we should not hesitate to name them to each other now.”

“My dear—my only brother!” was all that Cathleen could articulate, before bright, burning

tears were in her eyes—the first she had shed for many weary days, and restless nights.

“Cathleen,” said Terence, “distress yourself no more. I will return when you are better able to converse.”

“No, Terence, that will never be. I am so cool and so collected now, that if I leave this holy duty till a more convenient season, we may never pray together in this world; and in the next it may be too late. Kneel down by my bed, Terence, and join your supplications to those of a dying sinner.”

Terence knelt beside her, and with her hands raised in the attitude of prayer, and eyes cast upward, she poured her soul out in the fervent language of one who bows beneath the overwhelming power of the Almighty arm; who having loved this earth too well, and leaned too fondly on its bosom, has known its mortal bonds converted into cords of anguish; and who, standing on the very brink of eternity, acknowledges neither hope nor title to an inheri-

tance in the regions of eternal peace, save what depends upon the sanction of a holy Redeemer and the mercy of a gracious God.

A solemn silence succeeded to this soul-felt prayer. At last the afflicted brother rose from his humble posture, and looking on the pale countenance, so lately animated with the warmth of human feeling, beheld nothing but the fixed and marble features of the dead !

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